

Dolce Cabot and the *Canterbury Times* “Ladies’ Page”: An Examination of Early New Zealand Women’s Journalism.

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ABSTRACT

Women's media has been recognised in recent years as having a powerful influence in defining gender roles and structuring normative social behaviour. This influence was at no point more significant than in the late nineteenth-century when growing social ferment concerning the "Woman Question" combined with the dramatically expanding periodical press to produce a full-scale international women's media industry. Although in New Zealand such developments were not as expansive as in England and America, the women's media that were established in the 1890s to meet the needs of the "New Woman" were no less significant in structuring the evolving identity of the female population.

Editor of the *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page" from May 1894 to October 1907, Dolce Ann Cabot played an important role in this process. As one of New Zealand's first female journalists, she endeavoured to provide a source of guidance and companionship for her readers while alerting them to the value and significance of the Women's Movement. A public supporter of the women's suffrage bill passed in September 1893, she was to evince a strong commitment to feminist objectives for the duration of her journalistic career.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the ways in which Cabot directs the processes of gender enculturation in the "Ladies' Page" and the contributions she makes to shaping the behaviour, values and ideals of New Zealand women. Within this framework particular attention will be given to her feminist writing and to the ways in which she responds to the dialectic between tradition and modernity. The *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page" was not intended as a radical feminist publication but as a text for the general interest of all women, so it is therefore important to examine how Cabot negotiates the boundaries between radicalism and conservatism. Above all, this thesis seeks to bring to light the work of a woman who is a significant, though much neglected, figure in New Zealand feminist history.

INTRODUCTION

Dolce Ann Cabot held the position of "Lady Editor" for the *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page" in a decade crucial to both New Zealand women's history and the development of the New Zealand periodical industry. Spanning the period from May 1894 to October 1907, her editorial work not only reflected the significant changes in these two areas but was in fact dependent upon their occurrence. Until the Women's Movement of the 1880s and '90s succeeded in widening women's educational and employment opportunities, the "separate spheres" ideology that governed New Zealand society was as prohibitive to women entering the career of journalism as it was for women pursuing other public professions, if not more so. Journalism was (as it still is) an area involving a public "voice", which was of particular sensitivity with regard to women, as social propriety dictated that they remain out of public view. With the granting of the vote to New Zealand women in September 1893, however, the "voice" and authority of women within the public arena assumed a new significance and valorisation, and increasing numbers of women began infiltrating occupations hitherto unknown to them, including journalism.

Mirroring the changing circumstances of English women's lives, to a lesser or greater degree,¹ these advancements were well recorded by the press, and frequent reference was made to the emergence of a new female type, or "New Woman". In an article entitled "Women's Newspapers", published in an English periodical in 1894, it was stated that "'the irrepressible she' meets us at every turn in modern life, and perhaps the multiplication and development of newspapers devoted to her special interests, is not the least significant token of her vitality" (qtd. in Ballaster et. al. 75). A comparable statement made in a *Canterbury Times* advertisement reads: "Woman is making her voice heard in journalism as in every other walk of life". These comments refer not only to the wider participation of women in the public sphere but also to the vast expansion of women's media that occurred simultaneously. This was most noticeable in England and America, where a women's press was already established, but in New Zealand it

¹ English women did not receive the vote until 2 July 1928.

helped give rise to a fledgling women's press and the development in the 1890s of colonial women's magazines.

The "Ladies' Page" was not a women's magazine but a section in the weekly digest of a general purpose newspaper. It was, however, based upon the traditional formulae of English women's magazines, and in line with the practice of most New Zealand women's newspaper sections of that period, was edited by a male with a female pseudonym. Cabot was employed by the *Canterbury Times* with the deliberate intention that her presence would place the "Ladies' Page" at the forefront of New Zealand women's media. Until the inauguration of *Daybreak* and *White Ribbon* some months after Cabot's appointment, there were no full-sized New Zealand women's magazines to compete for this position and the *Canterbury Times* hence made the proud claim that their journal was the "FIRST WOMAN'S NEWSPAPER" in the colony (CT 12 April 1894, 47) - the first to be both written *for* women and *by* a woman.

Cabot is not only significant for being one of New Zealand's first female journalists, she was also one of the country's first feminist journalists. The *Canterbury Times* employed Cabot with the objective of modernising the "Ladies' Page" and in line with both this aim and her own sympathies with the Women's Movement, she used the "Ladies' Page" as a forum for addressing feminist issues. Yet to all appearances the section remained a general interest periodical text. This is a highly important factor in the history of the early New Zealand Women's Movement, for it represents one of the first steps toward incorporating feminist concerns into the more general matters of daily life. As the *Canterbury Times* was a very popular and widely-circulated newspaper, Cabot would have contributed significantly to shaping many women's attitudes and sense of identity; and because she was writing through the medium of a general interest newspaper, her work would have had a far broader impact than that of women who are now recognised as important New Zealand feminists.

It is thus surprising that so little study has been devoted to Cabot's work. Aside from the entry in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, written by Helen Debenham, there is no published research concerning this woman's career, and yet in the early years of the twentieth-century she was hailed by *Cassells' Magazine* as being amongst New Zealand's most prominent female writers (Thomson 308). The purpose of this thesis is to remedy that dearth by examining

in close detail a sample of Cabot's "Ladies' Pages". This will entail a broad study of the ideological function of the "Ladies' Page" in establishing gender roles and normative social behaviour. Particular emphasis will be laid upon Cabot's approach to the Women's Movement and also upon her success at amalgamating the traditional and modern elements of women's media. As will be illustrated, there are inherent contradictions throughout the "Ladies' Page", for which Cabot is at times personally responsible but which also arise out of the inclusion of syndicated material and the necessity of meeting reader expectation. It contributes to an overall sense of heterogeneity, which is strong enough in certain instances to raise the question of whether Cabot was primarily a crusader for women's rights or an entrencher of normative values. This thesis will argue decisively for the former evaluation and will illustrate, in conclusion, why the elements of heterogeneity are in fact an important element in the success of Cabot's feminist agenda.

To this end Chapter One will begin with a discussion of Cabot's background, the social context in which she was writing and the main influences shaping her work; Chapter Two will illustrate how the "Ladies' Page" functions as a "gendered space" and, hence, as a site of gender enculturation; in Chapter Three a consideration will be made of Cabot's mode of address and the degree to which it privileges the middle-class reader and middle-class values; and Chapter Four will examine Cabot's contributions to the Women's Movement. With regard to each of these subjects all of the material in the "Ladies' Page" will be studied, including articles by other writers. Owing to the considerable number of "Ladies' Page" issues available,² however, and to the aim of establishing a sense of continuity across time, research will be restricted to a set sample. This will involve the study of one month's worth of "Ladies' Pages" for every three year period of Cabot's career, beginning in May 1894 and concluding in October 1907.³ This sample has been liberally quoted from throughout the thesis, with the objective of fulfilling to best effect the overall aim of the study: the

² Almost all of the "Ladies' Page" issues edited by Cabot for the duration of her thirteen year career are available on microfilm. It should also be noted that the "Ladies' Page" was not a single page, as its title implies, but ranged from between three and seven pages in length.

³ Note that there is only a one year gap between the last two sections of the sample; this is to allow for the study of the final two issues of Cabot's editorship.

revelation of the work of a little-known, though historically important, New Zealand writer.

ABBREVIATIONS

CT	—	<i>Canterbury Times</i>
CWI	—	Canterbury Women's Institute
DNZB	—	Dictionary of New Zealand Biography
FF	—	"Frills of Fashion" / "Fashion and Frivolities" ("Ladies' Page")
HH	—	"Household Hints" ("Ladies' Page")
HT	—	"Here and There" ("Ladies' Page")
LT	—	<i>Lyttleton Times</i>
NCW	—	National Council of Women
SR	—	"Social Round" ("Ladies' Page")
WCTU	—	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WD	—	"Woman's Diary" ("Ladies' Page")
W W	—	"Woman's World" ("Ladies' Page")

CHAPTER ONE: SOCIAL CONTEXT

At the time of Dolce Cabot's employment with the *Canterbury Times* it was highly unusual for a woman to be working in New Zealand as a full-time journalist. During the late nineteenth-century New Zealand society was still predominantly governed by a spatial segregation of the sexes. The "separate spheres" ideology (Poovey 8), transplanted from Victorian England, dictated that women confine their activities to the domestic realm of the home and that the public world of work and politics should remain a strictly male preserve. The effect of this was not as powerful in the 1890s as it had been in the earlier part of the century. The Women's Movement, initiated in the 1880s, had made significant progress in expanding women's participation in the public world and over the ensuing decades there was a steady infiltration by women into occupations previously monopolised by men. Journalism was one such field. There was still a residual conservatism however, concerning women's "proper place", and the definitions of femininity that accompanied the separate spheres doctrine continued to influence the parameters of women's existence.

Cabot was highly conscious of the novelty of her position with the newspaper and this awareness significantly shaped her construction of a public self and how she viewed both her editorial role and the audience whom she was entertaining. This chapter will seek to elucidate further the social context of Cabot's writing and the specific elements that contributed to her emergence. A brief biography of Cabot will be provided, followed by a discussion of the five main areas that impacted upon her work. They are: the prevalence of the bourgeois domestic ideology in structuring nineteenth-century women's lives; the Women's Movement and its attendant redefinitions of femininity; the colonial experience, which carried with it the distinctive "pioneering spirit" ideology; the traditions associated with the genre of women's media; and finally, the circumstances surrounding New Zealand journalism and the *Canterbury Times* specifically. This will be followed by an examination of the conditions directly surrounding Cabot's appointment and of her suitability for this significant public role.

Dolce Ann Cabot was born on 25 November 1862 in Christchurch, New Zealand. Her father, Thomas Cabot, was a language teacher and farmer who had originally come from Jersey and had settled for a time in New South Wales, Australia, before moving to New Zealand. He worked briefly as a teacher and farmer in the Canterbury area until finally establishing a small farm in Otipua Valley. Cabot's mother was Louisa Augusta Kunkel, the daughter of a Prussian army officer.

The eldest daughter in a family of three boys and four girls, Cabot was initially privately educated and is said to have been able to read both French and German by the age of 10 (Thomson 308). She was a pupil of Christchurch Girls' High School from late 1878 until December 1880; underwent teacher training at Christchurch Normal School from 1881 to 1882; and worked as a teacher at Timaru Main School from 1882 to 1891. Having undertaken extramural study at Canterbury College in 1887, Cabot resigned from her teaching position and pursued her studies full time from 1891 to 1892 (Debenham 71). She was unable to complete her Bachelor of Arts degree but articles she wrote regarding women's suffrage, which were published in the *Canterbury Times* in September 1893, were sufficient to draw her to the attention of that newspaper as a suitable editor for the "Ladies' Page" (Thomson 309). Editing her first issue for 3 May 1894, the thirty-two-year-old Cabot was to continue her career in journalism until her marriage to Andrew Duncan, a railway station-master, in Timaru on 30 October 1907.

It is not known how much Cabot published after her marriage, although the fact she was given the care of seven step-children must have been prohibitive. It is recorded however that in 1922 she assisted with the launch of the *Ladies' Mirror* in Auckland and that she wrote several articles for that publication (Debenham 71). Having moved to a number of locations for Andrew's job, the couple finally returned to Christchurch in 1928, following his retirement in 1922. Andrew Duncan died in 1935 and Dolce Duncan, surviving her husband by eight years, died on 31 May 1943.

In addition to her involvement with the *Canterbury Times* and the *Ladies' Mirror*, Cabot was a member of the Canterbury Women's Institute and published a number of poems and short-stories⁴ In spite of her literary pursuits however, she considered herself primarily a

⁴ Two of Cabot's poems appear in W.F. Alexander and A.E. Currie's anthology, *New Zealand Verse* (1906).

journalist, and this is the occupation stated on her marriage certificate. It was evidently a source of some pride to her as after her resignation she was hailed as the "first woman to hold a position on the staff of any New Zealand newspaper" (Thomson 308). The basis for this comment, written in February 1909, was presumably Mr. S. Saunders'⁵ claim that Cabot was the "first lady journalist in the Dominion, first not only in point of time, but first also in point of ability" ("Presentation by the Staff" *Canterbury Times* 9 Oct. 1907, 72). Whether Cabot was the first is cast in doubt by a small number of other women who were also engaged in journalistic activities in the same period.⁶ In light of these figures the first description may be more accurate; Cabot may not have been the first female journalist but she still could have been the first female officially recognised as a full-time newspaper staff-member.

Regardless of the accuracy or inaccuracy of such claims, what is clear is that female journalists were a rarity in nineteenth-century New Zealand. As with many occupations, women were discouraged from pursuing journalism as a career by the cultural prevalence of the "separate spheres" ideology. Emerging in eighteenth-century Europe with the growth of industrialism, capitalism, and an evolving middle-class, the doctrine of separate spheres (or domestic ideology, as it was also known) was a product of the increasing separation of home from work place, and of the bourgeois need to consolidate their new-found status. Essentially, it represented the division of gender roles into public and private: men were believed to be ideally suited to the public world of work and politics, while women, by virtue of their child-bearing capacities and what were deemed to be inherent nurturing qualities, were felt to belong in the private domestic realm (Poovey 8-9). The biological associations contributed to the naturalisation of the ideology and, hence, to a widely held faith in its authenticity.

⁵ Editor-in-chief of the *Lyttelton Times* and *Canterbury Times*.

⁶ Other possible candidates for this title are Margaret Bullock (1845-1903), who assisted her brother with the *Wanganui Chronicle* during the 1870s'; Lizzie Frost Rattray (1855-1931), the New Zealand correspondent for *Gentlewoman* magazine in England; Eleanor Phoebe Smith (1855-1931), the editor of the *New Zealand Tit-Bits* magazine; and Laura Jane Suisted (1840-1903), who worked as a parliamentary note-taker in 1884 and became the first female member admitted to the New Zealand Institute of Journalists in 1891 (DNZB Vol. II 1870-1900) From 1891, members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union were also contributing to a regular page in the fortnightly *Prohibitionist*.

For the middle-classes, the "separate spheres" doctrine was an important element of decorum and status (Langland 8-9). The home became a place of conspicuous consumption, symbolising the proverbial "haven of bliss", and it was the middle-class woman's role to maintain the appropriate standards. In her capacity as wife and mother she was idealised as the moral guardian and educator of the nation, and as "the angel by the hearth" (Langland 8-9). She was constructed as the "perfect lady", though the quality of good breeding lay not in her pedigree but in her ability to govern the home. In the most ideal of circumstances this entailed supervising a large serving staff rather than performing domestic tasks personally. Like the servants themselves however, she was an important component of the "paraphernalia of gentility" which the bourgeois desired to surround themselves with and was essentially an ornament in her own home (Branca 6; Ofner 45).

The binary organisation of the sexes into a private feminised sphere and a masculine public sphere was an equally predominant factor in the social context of New Zealand. Although the incentive of many settlers was to create a more egalitarian society than that left behind in England, the early settlements were distinctly class-oriented and the bourgeois again composed the ruling class (Day 65). In the primitive colonial environment the domestic role of women was of even greater importance, being perceived as fundamental to the maintenance of "civilisation" and the conventions of polite society (Wevers 245).

At least until the advent of the Women's Movement in the 1880s, the prevalence of the domestic ideology meant that women were automatically expected to marry and have children. Those unable to marry had to contend not only with being derogatively labelled "spinster" or "old maid", but were faced with limited choices in supporting themselves economically. Under restriction from public life the only occupations that a woman could respectably pursue in the mid-nineteenth-century were those reflecting the domestic role. Amongst the middle-class this encompassed teaching, governessing and sewing; for the lower-class the main forms of employment were domestic service, retail work, the running of hotels and boarding-houses, and factory work involving textiles, foods and beverages.⁷

⁷ Factory work became a new and rapidly expanding form of employment for New Zealand women during the late 1870s and 1880s (Ofner 79).

Employment limitations and the expectation of matrimony dictated that women's educational opportunities were also restricted, there being no perceived necessity for them to attend either a secondary or tertiary institution.

Prior to the 1880s and '90s New Zealand women had been equally disadvantaged under the legal system. They had no legal status separate from their husband's and any property they owned automatically transferred to his possession upon marriage. The husband also retained full guardianship of any children from the marriage (Ofner 89). Additionally, while husbands might readily obtain divorce on the basis of adultery, wives had to prove extreme physical abuse or abandonment to achieve this end. Efforts to redress these inequalities resulted in the Married Women's Property Act of 1884, which granted wives the right to any income and property they brought into marriage (Ofner 89), but divorce continued to be a contentious issue throughout the latter part of the century.

Dolce Cabot entered the public arena at a time when the attitudes towards women induced by the "separate spheres" doctrine were still endemic, but undergoing a transition through the effects of the Women's Movement. In New Zealand there were several different strands of feminism running throughout the second half of the century. As early as the 1850s women were demanding a change to property rights (Ofner 89), but the main thrust of the movement began in the 1880s with the establishment of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (1885). Introduced by an American "missionary", Mrs. Mary Clement Leavitt, the W.C.T.U. found ready support amongst New Zealand women. As had occurred in other frontier societies, the excessive alcohol consumption of the male population had become a significant cause of poverty, domestic violence and prostitution, and many women were united in the goal of prohibition (Grimshaw 3). The umbrella objective of the W.C.T.U. was "social purity" and as it was believed that women exercised a moralising, purifying influence upon men's baser instincts, suffrage for women became another important goal. It was felt that women's inherent morality would have a positive effect in the nation's polling booths and that greater social justice would result. The thirteen W.C.T.U. branches established nation-wide were followed in 1892 by the foundation of subsidiary Women's Franchise Leagues, which lobbied vigorously for women's suffrage until finally winning the campaign

in September 1893. Almost all women engaged in public activism prior to World War I were members of the W.C.T.U. (Bunkle 53) and because of its pre-eminence in the suffrage campaign this organisation significantly influenced the tenor of New Zealand feminism. With its emphasis on social purity, the W.C.T.U. was narrowly focused however, and subsequent organisations such as the Canterbury Women's Institute (1892) and National Council of Women (1896) evinced a much broader feminist agenda. As well as suffrage and social purity they addressed issues specifically concerning women's welfare: the lack of employment and educational opportunities, the want of pay parity and dress reform, women's health and fitness, and the necessity of improved working conditions for women. It is not known whether Cabot was a member of the W.C.T.U., although she does report on W.C.T.U. activities in the "Ladies' Page". She was a C.W.I. member however, and as will be shown in Chapter Four her own feminist agenda was broadly based. A strong supporter of the social good that might arise from women's emancipation, Cabot was also a vigorous advocate for women's emotional, mental and physical well-being.

Many of the women involved in suffrage activities assumed an unprecedented public role, actively engaging in large public meetings, pamphleteering, and the writing of letters and articles for newspapers, such as Cabot herself wrote. As the suffrage campaign was centred in Christchurch,⁸ Cabot was in fact in the midst of events, being at that stage a student of Canterbury College. It was a heady period and contemporaries considered the suffrage campaign to be the most effective pressure group the country had witnessed (Grimshaw 5); a claim borne out by its comparatively rapid success in making New Zealand the first country to grant women the vote.

Throughout the 1870s and '80s New Zealand women were also making steady advancement educationally. There were girls' high schools established in Otago, Auckland, Napier, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Invercargill during this time which prepared young women for tertiary education (Hughes 119). The first New Zealand female medical student, Emily Siedeberg, graduated in 1891 (Hughes

⁸ As an indication of Christchurch's pre-eminence in the Movement, it may be noted that when the National Council of Women was established in 1896 three Christchurch women held the positions of President, Secretary and Treasurer: Kate Sheppard, Ada Wells, and Miss Sherriff Bain (Chambers 11).

129), and the first woman to become a lawyer, in either New Zealand or the British Empire, was Ethel Benjamin in 1897.⁹ New Zealand also produced the first female Bachelor of Arts and the first female Honours graduate in the British Empire (Hughes 133). As will be seen from the dates, these events were occurring just before or during Cabot's employment with the *Canterbury Times*, and she herself was of the first generation of New Zealand women to pass through the dominion's universities. Naturally there was still much resistance to these developments, and women such as Cabot were regarded as progressive, rebellious even, but acting against the norm of expected feminine behaviour at the very least.

From the 1870s the number of women engaged in employment also steadily increased. While only 11.1 per cent of women were employed outside the home in 1874, by 1921 this figure had reached 20.7 per cent (Olssen 162). The strongest contributing factor to the increase was the widening gap in the proportion of men to women. This was especially true of Christchurch and Dunedin from the 1880s through to the early twentieth-century when there were significantly fewer men than women in the fifteen to thirty-five age group (Olssen 160). Larger numbers of women were seeking employment out of economic necessity. The majority of working women were still only doing so as a stop-gap between school and marriage, though the range of occupations available to them in the later part of the century had noticeably increased (Olssen 165). In addition to the professions of law and medicine now open to women, there were numerous new opportunities in the expanding industrial sector and in clerical and secretarial work.

The demands for wider educational and employment avenues and new political rights, coupled with their gradual achievement, contributed to the sense of a newly emerging female type. The modern woman was gradually materialising and as Cabot's own work shows, the growing consciousness of "her" existence was prevalent

⁹ One of Cabot's personal friends, Stella May Henderson, completed the Bachelor of Laws degree in March 1898, but did not officially graduate. In the same year as completing her studies, Henderson was offered the position of Wellington parliamentary correspondent and political leader writer for the *Lyttelton Times*. She accepted and thus became New Zealand's first female parliamentary reporter ("*Lyttelton Times* engaged dominion's first woman parliamentary reporter" *Christchurch Star-Sun*, 16 October 1958). Henderson's sister, Elizabeth, also a friend of Cabot's, became New Zealand's first female Member of Parliament in 1933 (Miller 99).

throughout society and especially amongst women themselves. This model of femininity, commonly identified as the "New Woman"¹⁰ both in New Zealand and abroad, was most thoroughly characterised by a growing air of independence and personal autonomy. Many of the younger generation were challenging the limitations imposed upon their existence by the conventions of polite society; they sought satisfaction through means other than the perfected execution of domestic duty, and the concept of the New Woman was indicative of their striving towards a modernity above and beyond the restraints of tradition.

There were potential penalties for being associated with the Women's Movement and for being a "progressive" New Woman. Many detractors vehemently decried feminists as "over-educated book-fiends", "short-haired he-women", and "the shrieking sisterhood" (Grimshaw 6). This was especially aimed at those women who maintained a public face through their activities. Women who spoke and wrote publicly and who openly expressed opinions were deeply frowned upon by those of the old school. For this reason journalism was a particularly adventurous choice of occupation for women and one which had to be carefully approached for fear of public shame and disapprobation.

The social prohibitions upon women in New Zealand were arguably much less than those in England, however, as a result of the former holding far greater responsibility (Grimshaw 2). Living conditions in the colonial environment were primitive and isolated, and subsistence often required intense physical labour from all members of the family, including wives, mothers and daughters (Ofner 25). A shortage of domestic servants also meant that many middle-class women had an unprecedented responsibility in running their households, performing duties customarily performed by servants (Ofner 74). This more active life-style precipitated a strong sense of pioneering spirit and stoicism. Far from being labelled an idle "bread and butter Miss" (Branca 6), the colonial woman was perceived as self-reliant and emotionally robust. Many books praised the "all-round capability" of the New Zealand girl, and one visitor to New

¹⁰ According to Juliet Gardiner, the term 'New Woman' first entered into currency in the mid 1890s when it was coined in a debate between the two novelists, Sarah Grand and Ouida (6). The conception of this new feminine figure was, however, permeating popular consciousness throughout the 1880s, 1890s and early twentieth century.

Zealand in the 1850s claimed to admire most “the work-worn hands of the women” (Wevers 244-5). Other visitors made reference to the independence and egalitarian spirit of New Zealand women (Grimshaw 2) Having developed these qualities of character, many more women were ready to support the claims of the Suffrage Movement and New Zealand society in general was more convinced of its rightness. The egalitarian sentiment fostered by settlers induced supporters to regard female enfranchisement specifically as a “colonial movement” (*Auckland Star*. 11 June 1892, 2, qtd in Grimshaw 7) and pro-suffrage feeling was regularly registered in the colony’s newspapers.

The greater freedom of New Zealand women also owed much to the high degree of liberalism in New Zealand politics and to the fact that the New Zealand government manifested none of the entrenched conservatism inherent in older governments (Grimshaw 8). The suffrage bill was passed with relatively little obstruction.

Internationally, at the same time as these dramatic changes were occurring in women’s lives, women’s media were undergoing a rapid expansion.¹¹ The periodical industry as a whole grew significantly in the late nineteenth-century,¹² but women in particular became a target audience as they were recognised as constituting a largely untapped source of readership (Brake 100-101). They were perceived as having different interests from male readers, which could not be adequately met by the daily and weekly newspapers and which therefore required specialist attention.¹³ There were significant commercial benefits in providing for women’s interests, as it was observed that while married women were not, for the most part, economically independent, they were responsible for budgeting their household’s expenses and were

¹¹ With the exception of family magazines, there were forty-eight new women’s periodicals introduced between 1880 and 1900 in England alone (White 58). The figures in America were also high. Patricia Okker has identified over 600 American female editors who were working in the nineteenth-century, and many of them were editing women’s periodicals (4-5).

¹² The explosion of the periodical industry was due to widespread social, economic and technological advancements: education Acts stipulating free and compulsory education for all gave rise to a mass readership, while developments in machinery and paper design facilitated cheap mass production (White 59).

¹³ The editor of English magazine, *Hearth and Home* (1891), is quoted as saying “Good as journals of everyday reading are, it is hardly to be expected that they should deal with the masses of matter they have to consider from a point of view women should take when discussing it themselves” (qtd in White 72-3). This is indicative of the widely held nineteenth-century belief that articles must be written according to the sex of the intended audience.

the main consumers of the family. They would buy periodicals for themselves and if a general newspaper or magazine could be touted as an all-round family journal, containing a women's and children's section, it was also more likely to be listed amongst a family's regular costs (Ballaster et. al. 80). Additionally, because of their consumer status, a female audience exerted considerable appeal in drawing product advertisers to a periodical.

Women were also identified as being the group for whom the periodical genre held the greatest attraction. In her examination of the English women's periodicals of a much earlier period, Kathryn Shevelow writes that the limited educational background of women, combined with their perceived leisure time, clearly marked them as a potentially strong audience (33). A further attraction lay in the fragmented, patch-work nature of the periodical which made it possible to read brief passages in between household tasks. Shevelow identified eighteenth-century women as being peculiarly susceptible to the *utile et dulce* formula, which combined characteristics of the romance, the sermon, and the conduct book (33).

Given the expansion of women's educational and occupational horizons in the late nineteenth-century, there was a much wider range of material to be covered in order to meet women's interests. Even so, the *utile et dulce* formula continued to be popular. While the emphasis changed according to whether a publication was upper, middle, or lower-class, most women's periodicals contained a fiction section and a range of advice on household management, etiquette, fashion and health. Needlework designs, literary topics, gossip, Society news, details of upcoming events, and articles on miscellanea, such as gardening, pets, hygiene and care of the sick, might also be found interspersed with these basic ingredients. With little variation, the subject matter of women's media revolved around the domestic sphere and recognised "feminine" occupations and hobbies. Women's newspaper sections supplied the same material, creating in effect mini women's magazines. Note that it is specifically English magazines that are being referred to here, as these formed the model for the development of New Zealand women's media and were the only women's periodicals available in the colony until the 1890s.

While the above formula was successful, Cynthia White states that publishers who were eager to profit from the booming new industry were too ready to assume that a mixture of traditionally

"feminine" items would produce a saleable product. Amongst some sectors of the female audience there were complaints that women's periodicals did not meet the needs of the intelligent woman who sought more than the trivialities of gossip and fashion. It was commonly stated that "the average educated woman ... is not adequately represented in that branch of the press that professes to speak for her" (*Hearth and Home* 1891 qtd in White 72). This resulted in attempts by some editors to cater for what White describes as an "attitude group" rather than for a specific class or for the female sex as a whole (72). These editors sought to address like-minded women - educated women and women in employment - who were thinkers and readers and evinced a genuine interest in social affairs. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, catering for the "thinking woman" was of particular importance to Cabot as a ladies' editor.

Simultaneously there was a general resistance among English magazine editors to espousing any sympathies with the Women's Movement and to publicising feminist activities. The subject was given more attention in the 1890s than during the 1850s when English feminism had largely been ignored by women's magazines, but most publishers continued to maintain a conservative and traditional approach (White 89-90). The magazines which did express a commitment to women's rights invariably ceased publication within one or two years of inauguration, whereas those that adhered to the old formula enjoyed instant success and were often able to sustain a run for decades. The reason for this, as White describes it, was that the conflict between traditional beliefs and the propaganda of the Women's Movement left many women confused and uncomfortable about their identity, "neither able to sit at ease in the old confines, nor dash ahead with [their] pioneering sisters" (89). While many women were excited by the ideals of the Women's Movement and looked favourably upon the changes in women's lives, they still felt safer with what was familiar and looked forward to what they had been accustomed to reading for enjoyment. Hence, it was more profitable for periodicals to tread a "middle" ground.

A further distinction of the late nineteenth-century women's press was its function as a means of communication. The periodical became a locus for contact, not only between editor and reader but between women across the country and around the world. This was a product of the new sociability between women, arising from their

greater freedom and independence. Manifested also in the sudden proliferation of women's clubs and committees, it signalled a growing desire amongst women for increased interaction and for the active exchange of ideas, advice and feelings of friendship (White 77).

This last factor, especially, depended upon the steady expansion of women into the field of journalism. Before the late nineteenth-century most women's media had been under the editorship of men, and the mode of address had tended towards paternalism rather than equality and "friendship" (Shevelow 13). With the expansion of women's media, however, and the increase in women's freedom to participate in the wider public sphere, a growing number of periodicals came to have female editors. In many respects the role of women in journalism was a simulacrum of the "separate spheres" ideology. Many women justified their involvement in the occupation on the basis that they were writing for their own gender, and as will be seen in Chapter Two, it was quite possible for a women's newspaper section or magazine to operate as a seamless feminine space. Okker states that in the American context the authority of female editors often stemmed from their willingness to promote themselves as women in a female-oriented sphere (25).

Although steadily growing, the periodical industry in New Zealand was still comparatively small during the late nineteenth-century. The population was too few to support a wide variety of periodicals,¹⁴ and moreover, as long as British periodicals continued to be available in New Zealand, there was little need or motivation to establish local equivalents (Tye 224). Even in the 1890s first generation New Zealanders followed their parents in the eager anticipation of the "Home papers". An advertisement in the *Otago Witness* for news agent, W.J. Prictor & Co. (6 May 1897, 1), suggests that a considerable number of British journals were available nation-wide. Amongst their wares are listed: *Harper's Monthly*, *London Journal*, *Strand Magazine*, *Review of Reviews*, *English Sixpenny Illustrated*, *Chambers's Journal*, *Scribner's Monthly*, *Chums*, *Windsor Magazine*, *Cassell's History of England*, *Cassell's Saturday Journal*, *Glasgow Weekly Mail and Herald*, *People's Journal*, *Edinburgh Scotsman*, *Lloyd's Weekly*, *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, *Illustrated London News*, and *People's Friend*.

¹⁴ As an indication of the industry's fragility, it may be noted that between the years of 1880 and 1899 150 newspapers were initiated and 85 ceased operation (Scholefield 6).

The British periodical industry was also the primary source of women's magazines and in this category W.J. Proctor & Co. offers: *Ladies' Journal*, *Family Herald*, *Family Reader*, *Cassell's Family Magazine*, *Woman at Home*, *Household Worlds*, *Schild's Mother's Help* and *Ladies' Fashions*, *Waldon's Ladies' Journal*, *Gentlewoman* and *The Queen*.¹⁵ Judging by the content of the *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page" and by the frequency with which Cabot refers to them, one may also surmise that *Woman's World*, *Hearth and Home*, *Woman*, *The Housekeeper*, *The Woman's Signal*, and *Lady's Pictorial* were also readily available. The first tentative steps toward establishing New Zealand women's magazines were not made until the 1890s with the inauguration of the *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Magazine* (May 1890), *Daybreak* (February 1895),¹⁶ and the *White Ribbon* (May 1895). As in the instance of the *Canterbury Times*, however, many of the community newspapers did carry ladies' or women's pages in their weekly digests. These resembled mini magazines and were intended to cater specifically to the interests and needs of the female population.

In spite of the bias toward British periodicals there were a dedicated band of journalists working in New Zealand, and by 1900 there were few settled areas that did not have their own newspaper, whether weekly, bi-weekly, or tri-weekly (Scholfield 16). Given the cultural ties to the "Old Country", these papers had an inevitable derivative quality which was further emphasised by the heavy reliance upon syndicated material from both national and international sources. Patrick Day states that as in other countries it was acceptable for newspapers to copy each other's material and that much reporting was achieved "by judicious use of scissors" (61). Cabot herself relied heavily upon material from British and American magazines and as will be seen in later chapters she followed closely the format of English middle-class women's media.

New Zealand journalism did have distinctive qualities, the most important being its ideological dedication to producing the projected Utopian society. From their inception the first newspapers in the colony were conceived of as the instruments of successful settlement:

¹⁵ Magazines which had "family" in the title were also invariably targeted at a female audience (White 58).

¹⁶ *Daybreak* was only able to sustain its run for one year before being forced to become part of *The People* through economic necessity.

they were viewed as civilising agents which would set social values and standards of morality; they were valued as useful repositories of information which would offer practical advice and assistance (Day 66); and towards the end of the nineteenth-century they provided the focus for a developing sense of national identity. The *Lyttelton Times* was established in Canterbury on 11 January 1851 with this specific agenda and its proprietors regarded the newspaper's cultural function seriously:

whilst a public press ... represents the public voice, it also acts directly and immediately as the teacher and guide of public opinion; and this action is powerful or feeble, according to the ability, beneficial or hurtful, according to the integrity and conscientiousness with which the task is performed. (11 January 1851)

By the 1890s the majority of newspapers had become profit-oriented commercial enterprises, but this sense of moral duty persisted. This had the effect of endowing New Zealand journalists with a status and prestige not accredited to their English counterparts, making the occupation of journalism more readily acceptable and respected (Day 170). This prestige was accentuated by the fact that New Zealand newspapers tended to be middle-class publications: only the wealthy could afford the cost of establishing a newspaper in the colony, and they addressed these newspapers primarily to their peers. The New Zealand press therefore preserved the interests of the major land-owning and dominant commercial and political elite (Day 6) and reinforced the intended class stratification of the settlements.

At the same time, the subject matter of New Zealand newspapers was less class-oriented than that of their English equivalents, having a more general application in an environment where class boundaries were not as rigid (Tye 211). Proprietors desired that their newspapers reach a mass audience, regardless of a specific address, and the fact that most newspapers in the 1860s and '70s were able to reduce their retail price to one penny helped make them accessible to all classes. The literacy rate in 1896 was 91.59 per cent, which meant that there was a potentially large audience to be secured (Tye 212).

The *Canterbury Times* was inaugurated in 1865 as the weekly digest of the *Lyttelton Times*. The *Lyttelton Times* had been the first

newspaper established in the Canterbury settlement and did not meet with serious competition until the emergence of *The Press* in June 1862. Still only a bi-weekly at that stage, the *Lyttelton Times* hence began daily publication (Day 122), and both the *Canterbury Times* and an evening daily, the *Star* (May 1868), were initiated out of commercial pressure to secure the Canterbury market (Day 125). *The Press* followed suit, providing Christchurch with the rare luxury in New Zealand of competing newspapers. The *Canterbury Times* had a variety of editors through the 1870s and '80s, but at the time of Cabot's appointment Samuel Saunders was editor-in-chief of both the *Canterbury Times* and its mother paper (Scholefield 217). He was a major influence in dictating both newspapers' Liberal partisanship and at the time of the Liberal Government's rise to power, these newspapers were instrumental in defining and promoting the Liberal position (Day 242).

As a weekly, the *Canterbury Times* tended to be more like a magazine than a newspaper and covered a wide variety of topics.¹⁷ It was deliberately designed for the benefit of the outlying rural population, to breach the gap between buying a daily and a more expensive separate periodical. Because of this there was a strong emphasis upon agricultural and horticultural articles and advertisements. These were accompanied by a "Reading for Everybody" column; a lengthy sports section, which covered horse-racing, cricket, swimming, athletics and tennis; commercial news (shipping, engineering, mining, and financial); local news; telegrams; Imperial politics; Australian news; Wellington news; inter-provincial news; columns on Science, Music and Drama, Chess, Aquatic Notes, Sailing, and Brevities; a Fiction section; the Children's Column, by Captain Kindheart (later Aunt Hilda); and the "Ladies' Page". The paper explicitly identified itself as a "Family Magazine", claiming to hold the "Front Rank" in that category (advertisement of 6 June 1900) and promoting its subject matter as "literature" of the highest class. Seeking to fulfil the role of guide and helpmeet, the *Canterbury Times* recommended itself as the all-round, one-stop library, which provided not only the most comprehensive information, but also the very latest and most trustworthy information:

¹⁷ During Cabot's career the newspaper expanded in size from roughly fifty to eighty pages.

The wide organisation of correspondents in every part of the Colony and throughout Britain, Europe, and America, enables [the *Canterbury Times*] to maintain the unique position it has held since its inauguration as caterer of news abreast of the times. Its cables are the fullest and most reliable to be obtained under the Southern Cross, and its promoters are determined that no effort shall be spared on their part to hold for the "Canterbury Times" the premier position it has deservedly obtained. (6 June 1900)

Both the *Canterbury Times* and *Lyttelton Times* made claims to being the foremost newspapers of their type in the country; one advertisement for the latter claimed "'The Lyttelton Times' is the most enterprising and popular paper in the Colony. Its Circulation is Unrivalled, surpassing that of any other morning newspaper in New Zealand" (CT 5 April 1894, 49). As advertising propaganda these statements cannot be taken as irrefutable proof of the company's pre-eminence. Neither is it possible to corroborate these claims with circulation figures. There is other evidence however, which suggests that the *Lyttelton Times* was a highly successful paper: from an early date it was one of the few commercially viable periodical enterprises in New Zealand, having a thousand guaranteed English subscriptions even before the first four ships sailed to the colony (Day 75); and it enjoyed an unusually long run for such an early newspaper, finally ceasing in 1929¹⁸ and sustaining a fierce rivalry with *The Press* for much of its duration.

The appointment of Cabot as editor of the "Ladies' Page" represented an attempt to keep both the *Canterbury Times* and the *Lyttelton Times* in the position of primacy they enjoyed. Sensitive to the new feminine modernity and, undoubtedly, to the commercial expediency of keeping abreast of women's wants and desires, the newspaper intended Cabot's editorship to mark an innovative departure. In the subscription advertisement anticipating her arrival it was stated:

¹⁸ The *Canterbury Times* ceased publication in 1917.

Woman is making her voice heard in Journalism as in every other walk of life. She is weary of the old-fashioned "Ladies' Page", and demands something more in keeping with her earnest active life. THE "CANTERBURY TIMES" WILL SUPPLY IT. The necessary arrangements are now complete; they will be put into operation early in April, and will make this Journal THE FIRST WOMAN'S NEWSPAPER IN AUSTRALASIA. (12 April 1894, 47)

Cabot's appearance was innovative for three reasons: first, because women were a rarity in the field of journalism; secondly, because Cabot had publicly voiced her sympathies with the Suffrage Movement by having articles published in the *Canterbury Times*, and had thus identified herself unequivocally as a progressive woman; and thirdly, relating to the first reason, because Cabot's predecessor had been male. While he may have sported the female Dickensian title of "Mrs. Jellaby", his use of pronouns and choice of content for the "Ladies' Page" indicate a male identity. From the advertisement's statement that the "Ladies' Page" will be the "first woman's newspaper" it may be assumed that "Mrs. Meander" and "Becky Sharp", the two editors before Jellaby, were also male, as well as the editors of all other New Zealand women's newspaper sections. There certainly were magazines *for* women, on both sides of the Tasman, but none, apparently, run by women. Again, this may merely be advertising propaganda. A further possibility, however, lies in the definition of the term "woman". In her examination of American women's periodicals of the same era, Patricia Okker states that editors frequently differentiated between the terms "lady" and "woman" to indicate a conservative or radical political orientation respectively (14). Laurel Brake corroborates this by stating that the term "woman" (in British periodicals) was closely associated with suffrage and higher education (128-142). The *Canterbury Times* may have meant to convey both the fact that the "Ladies' Page" was a fully female enterprise and that it was a modern and progressive publication, dedicated to the Liberal politics that had so recently given women the vote. The interests the newspaper purports to fulfil are those of the New Woman; and its acknowledgement of an insistent female "voice" and employment of a female editor show an acceptance of women's

infiltration of the public arena and a willingness to accommodate that. During the Suffrage Movement the *Times* company had given its support to the cause by publishing the articles of leading feminists such as Kate Sheppard, Margaret Sievwright, Lucy Smith and Jessie Mackay (Lovell-Smith 106, 114, 121, 110). And even after Cabot's appointment, an ongoing commitment to promoting strong female figures was evinced by the newspapers' employment records: as earlier stated, Stella Henderson became the *Times* parliamentary reporter in 1898; in 1904 Ettie Rout was hired as court reporter (Tolerton 37); and Jessie MacKay assumed Cabot's position when she resigned in 1907.¹⁹

When Cabot made her first appearance in the "Ladies' Page" issue of 3 May 1894, she filled a prescribed role that reflected a mixture of the elements discussed. As a university student and advocate of women's suffrage, she suited the newspaper's desire for a modern female "voice"; she was educated, evidently well-principled, and did not shy away from the public exposure demanded in a journalistic role. She came from a respected middle-class family, of good colonial farming stock, and was thus fitted to set the appropriate tone and moral standards for the projected middle-class audience. Being personally acquainted with the exigencies of the colonial farming life-style, she was also well-equipped to supply relevant and pertinent information to the wives and daughters of the rural community. Most importantly, as a woman, intimately acquainted with women's needs and interests, she was an ideal candidate for editing a women's newspaper.

In the context of late nineteenth-century New Zealand, the successful women's newspaper would blend tradition with modernity. It would fulfil the wants and needs traditionally ascribed to the female reader, but would take into account the great changes occurring in women's lives; it would provide a continuity in supplying what was familiar at "Home", yet would recognise the emergence of a new generation of "New Zealanders". For the many rural women living in isolation, the sense of female contact and "companionship" would be a significant element. Most importantly however, the successful women's newspaper would provide direction and a growing sense of identity in what was a highly transitional and confusing period in New Zealand women's lives. As will be shown in subsequent

¹⁹ MacKay maintained the position for ten years, during which time she continued to uphold feminist and minority causes (Lovell-Smith 25).

chapters, Cabot largely fulfilled all of these criteria, as well as meeting those of the *Canterbury Times* as a whole.

CHAPTER TWO: THE LADIES' PAGE AS A "GENDERED SPACE"

The most significant feature of the *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page" is its status as a "gendered space". The phrases "gendered space" and "gendered domain" are popular terms in modern feminist historiography for texts or locales where boundaries are established along gender lines. In the context of the "Ladies' Page" such boundaries are displayed in the title's explicit address to a female audience and reinforced by the "Page's"²⁰ content. The arrangement of newspaper material into distinct sections for male or female reading has at least four major consequences: firstly, as suggested earlier, it implies that men and women have different interests and reading requirements and a separate frame of reference for events occurring around them; secondly, in a social context where women's public agency is limited, it provides a valuable space in which women have the freedom to "speak, desire and create as women" (Grosz 133); thirdly, it exerts an homogenizing influence in casting the assumption that all women have the same interests and reading requirements on the basis of a shared biological identity; fourthly, and most importantly, as a text purporting to cater for women's wants and needs, it plays an important part in gender enculturation, the newspaper becoming simultaneously a reflector and establisher of gender definitions and roles. The first three points are essentially elements of the last, as all contribute to shaping women's social and cultural expectations.

Cabot is at once consciously and sub-consciously engaged in controlling gender enculturation, representing both the "product" and the oracle. The instructional tone of many of her editorials suggests both a didactic intent and the mindfulness of moral obligation inculcated into every middle-class girl. As well as "Lady Editor", she might also be identified as a "custodian of femininity" and in the very real sense of a formal duty which this connotes, "duty" being a word to which Cabot most frequently refers with regard to the female role. Cabot's custodianship may be understood in a variety of ways, however, relating not only to her promulgation

²⁰ The singular form of the title "Ladies' Page" is misleading, as during Cabot's employment the length of the section varied from three to seven pages. Any reference to the "Page" in this thesis may be taken to mean the section as a whole.

of the “correct” way of being a woman, but also to her protective care of the sex which she sees as having been disadvantaged and restricted by prejudice and ignorance, whose martyr-like services to the community go unacknowledged, and whose mental, emotional, and physical health is in need of sustenance. This chapter will examine the features which make the “Ladies’ Page” a “gendered space”, the consequences of this gendered separatism, and the qualities of Cabot’s overall custodianship.

It is the title of the “Ladies’ Page” which marks it most explicitly as the women’s section but the coherence of this space as a feminine space is conveyed in a variety of ways. Cabot’s appointment as the “Lady Editor” is a significant factor, finally removing from the section the last vestiges of maleness thinly veiled beneath the pseudonym of “Mrs. Jellaby”. That this was important to female readers is underscored by the later proud claims of *Daybreak*, which was always sub-titled with variations of “Published by Women in the Interests of Women” (Waldron 20).

The titles of the regular columns within the “Page” reinforce the sense of separatism by echoing the main title: “Woman’s World” and “Woman’s Diary” are equally evocative of an exclusively female realm. This overflows from the newspaper into the world of reality, as both columns relate to the activities of women in everyday life. In this way the “Ladies’ Page” reflects and perpetuates the conception of the sexes as inhabiting “separate spheres”. The titles of occasional articles consolidate this, as illustrated by the following selection: “A Notable Woman” ([*Gentlewoman*] 31 May 1894, 8), “Scientific Women and their Work” ([*American Paper*] 31 May 1894, 9), “How Women Writers Work” (21 Jan. 1897, 7), “The Unsocial Club of Women” ([*Gentlewoman*] 21 Jan. 1897, 7), “Don’ts’ For the Girls of the Present Day” (28 Jan. 1897, 8), “Colonial Women and Horticulture” (6 June 1900, 8), “Women’s Institute” (6 June 1900, 7), “Women’s Rights” ([*The Speaker*] 6 June 1900, 8), “Women and the Paris Exhibition” (13 June 1900, 8), and “Women as Inventors” (13 June 1900, 9). The articles and columns which do not illustrate gender specificity also contribute to the effect, however, as they invariably relate to subjects traditionally associated with the “sphere” of women. Any topic concerning the household, or activities pursued in the household, fits this criteria.

Advertising within the "Ladies' Page" is equally indicative of a gendered focus, being wholly concerned with fashion, products for the care of home and family, and the traditional feminine past-times of sewing and needlework. In one issue one might expect to find advertisements for Beath & Co.'s millinery, mantles, and underclothing; Neave's Food; French Coffee; Excelsior Soap; Mellor's Worcestor Sauce; Spring Blossom Ointment; knitting silk, filoselle and arrasene; and "Louis" velveteen fabric.

Cabot's mode of address is likewise significant. It was customary in nineteenth-century journalistic practice for a writer to use what is referred to as the "editorial we". The "we" was designed to preserve the anonymity of the journalist while reinforcing his role as the "mouth-piece" of the newspaper (Brake 87-88). Cabot's most prevalent invocation of the pronoun, however, is that which marks her as one of a universal community of women, part of the greater "sisterhood" to which she also frequently refers. This again reinforces the gender division and emphasises the idea of a coherent class of womanhood. "We" becomes a generic term for women, bridging any disparity between Cabot and her readers on the basis of age, class and experience, to unify them on the basis of their difference from men. It is also an example of the self-consciously feminine writing that female editors employed to emphasise the appropriateness of their role. A salient example of this appears in the editorial for 7 January 1897. While discussing the Hon. Mrs. Maclagan's statement that "Women need discipline ... if they are to succeed in the world by their own hands", Cabot writes:

it is true, *we* have no training whatever in this important equipment for work. Boys are disciplined from the cradle; they learn at school ... that there is a giving as well as a taking throughout the business of life. (HT 4)

Going on to say that "all women are, without exception, the better for exercising wholesome self-discipline", she concludes "wherefore, let *us* take the advice of Mrs. Haweis to heart, to 'cultivate a little dander, and sit tight', no matter what *our* station in life may happen to be" (my italics).

All of these factors - the titles, the advertising, the editorship and editorial mode of address - have the effect of establishing a strong cultural distinction between men and women. The "Ladies' Page" is so clearly identified as being for women that it admits no variation in the intended readership.²¹ Many researchers of women's media who have observed this gender-division in other newspapers have viewed it as unfairly imbalanced, because that which is not designated as women's reading constitutes the "great bulk of the press" (Brake 129). Through their interpretation "men's reading" therefore not only encompasses all human affairs but assumes such cultural dominance that it requires no gender signifier to indicate its intended audience. By comparison the material designated as being specifically for women is significantly lesser in scope, suggesting women have a much narrower range of interests and concerns, and a marginalised status. Bridget Waldron expresses this view in her study of early New Zealand periodicals, claiming that "women's media as a distinct category ... is indicative of women's position in society as being essentially 'other' than men" (11).

Conversely, it could equally be argued that the "great bulk of the press" was intended as reading for all and specific women's sections were as much a product of feminine demand as profit incentive.²² It should also be noted that in the case of the *Canterbury Times* at least, female journalists were being employed to write for sections of the newspaper other than the "Ladies' Page"; if one is to pursue the notion that in the nineteenth-century men wrote for men and women for women, this fact implies that the newspaper was aiming for a mixed general readership.

Under the latter interpretation the "Ladies' Page" may be viewed as a privileged space, a space set aside especially for women in which their personal interests may be covered in detail and at leisure, and where they have the freedom to "speak, desire and create as women" (Grosz 133). In this respect the feminine exclusivity of the "Ladies' Page" is important; rather than engendering a sense of marginalisation, the text has the appeal of a

²¹ This is not unique to the "Ladies' Page"; the trend recurs throughout nineteenth periodical literature, and the reader may note that it continues in twentieth-century magazines such as the *New Zealand Woman's Day* and *Woman's Weekly*.

²² See Chapter One, footnote 14.

club where membership is privileged. Women, on the very basis of a femaleness which precludes them from extensive public participation, are the honoured audience of Cabot's address. As stated in Chapter One, this would have been of significant value in the colonial context. Women's clubs were only beginning to emerge in the mid 1890s, and in a country where populations were sparse and characterised more by distance than proximity there were few other opportunities for women to engage in the social contact enjoyed by men. Doreen Vance writes that rural women, especially, experienced "terrible loneliness" and that for many of them the only social event of the year was the annual Agricultural and Pastoral Show (112).

The metaphor of the "Ladies' Page" as a club cannot be over-emphasised. While existing as a text to be read in the privacy of one's home, the "Ladies' Page" instils strongly the sense of shared experience and communal gathering. Familiarity is established with the regularity of each issue and the maintenance of a set format, and this is perhaps the reason for Cabot's preservation of the existing layout of her predecessor. Establishing a sense of novelty with her content, she maintains the continuity essential to projecting the sense of a regular "meeting place" by keeping many of the old column titles or making only slight variations to them: "Here and There", "Woman's World" and "Household Hints" are permanent features of the "Ladies' Page", while "Weddings", "The Woman's Diary", "Frills of Fashion", "Miss Colonia in London", and "The Social Round" make an almost constant appearance. Without exception, all of these titles appeared under the editorship of "Mrs. Jellaby".

The effect of interaction is created by the fact that at any time readers may "participate" in the proceedings through letters to the editor. While Cabot dispenses with the traditional invitation to correspondents (present in the "Ladies' Page" since 1885), she continues to run the "Answers to Correspondents" column, which stands as sufficient encouragement. On occasion, series of letters in consecutive issues give the effect of on-going debate or conversation. This occurs when one reader directly challenges Cabot on statements made about the "inherent differences" in men and women. She writes:

Will you permit me to ask you to particularise - to point out the inherent differences that you refer to in so vague a way. For my part, I am of opinion that your statement will not bear examination. ("En Avant", 24 May 1894, 9)

The topic is again pursued in the following issue when "Aliquis" comes to Cabot's defence:

I hold that the agitation for the abolition of sex difference - for that is, apparently, what "En Avant" and those like-minded are aiming at - is foolish, and will prove futile. ("The New Class of Woman" 31 May 1894, 9)

At the same time as these women are involving Cabot in debate, there is a sense that there are many other silent "listeners" following the proceedings, who could join in at any time.

The effect of conversation between disparate parties is also created by the regular correspondences from Dunedin, Timaru, Ashburton, Blenheim, Nelson, Wellington, Napier, and "Miss Colonia". Combined with the articles from national and international sources they evoke an overall feeling of colloquy that transcends time and geographical boundary. For as long as one takes to read the "Ladies' Page" one is part of a wider "community" that embraces women everywhere. The rhetoric of the *Canterbury Times* as a whole helps to accentuate this by emphasising the size of the newspaper's circulation and its nationwide popularity, exerting further persuasion that the reader is one of a large audience of like-minded people.

Familiarity is further reinforced by the mode of the letter itself. The implicit invitation to women to write letters encourages a perception of Cabot as a confidante, and the epistle, as a form of communication, inherently carries with it signifiers of intimacy and privacy. Extending even to the advertising, such as that for the Drapery Supply Association which engages the reader with the line "A Quiet Talk With You", this intimacy and conversational effect is most strongly achieved through Cabot's own choice of language. She adopts an informal style and familiar air that is deliberately

reminiscent of tête-à-têtes over the tea-cups. The “editorial we” contributes to this, producing what Okker describes in relation to early American lady editors as the “sisterly editorial voice” (23-5). The “we” identifies Cabot most thoroughly as being one with her readers, encouraging them to believe that they share collective concerns, a collective ownership, and collective experience; it establishes a footing of equality between Cabot and her readers. Her personal sadness at the death of the local librarian’s son, for example, is translated into an expression of communal grief:

We were all greatly shocked to hear of the sad death by burning of Mr. Strange’s little son We have all experienced the kind of helpfulness of Mr. Strange as public librarian, and he has our deepest sympathy.
(WD 3 May 1894, 9)

Christchurch Girls High School becomes “our Girls High School” (WD 3 May 1894, 9), and pastimes pursued in solitude or small family groups assume the status of shared seasonal rituals: “Now that the long cosy winter evenings are again with us we are beginning to draw our workbaskets to the fire and look forward to quiet hours of pleasant work and chat combined” (WD 10 May 1894, 9). Familial terms such as “sister” and “cousin” also appear frequently in Cabot’s text, and are used interchangeably to refer to any local or overseas woman. American women are “our sisters across the Atlantic” (WW 10 May 1894, 10), female shop assistants are “our much-tried sisters” (HT 3 May 1894, 9), and “Miss Colonia” addresses her correspondences to her “cousins across the sea” (3 May 1894, 9).

At the same time as creating familiarity and intimacy, however, the “we” exerts an homogenising influence upon the audience, functioning as what Marianna Torgovnick describes as a “covert, and sometimes coercive universal” (qtd in Hernadi 61). The homogenising effect begins with the implicit assumption that all women are peculiarly interested in the narrow range of topics purveyed in the “Ladies’ Page” and, by implication, that these topics are what define them as women. Cabot’s almost constant use of “we” dramatically reinforces this, because it suggests that in everything she says she is presuming to speak for the whole of her sex. While in

some instances the "we" simply evokes the sense of shared knowledge, at other times it is manipulative, becoming an important element of gender enculturation.

Since its inception women's media had been characterised by a high degree of didacticism, relating to all manner of subjects, from how to groom and adorn one's self to how to conduct one's self inside and outside the home. Ballaster, Beetham, Fraser and Hebron have suggested that this was a reason for the mass appeal of women's media. Citing the fact that "womanliness" has ever been the site of "competing definitions" (107), they posit the theory that the instructional tone of women's magazines offers direction and security, a "particular way of making sense of the world" (29), thus producing a "space where being a woman is unproblematic" (107). This was never more necessary than in the late nineteenth-century, when femininity and degrees of "womanliness" and "unwomanliness" were most thoroughly characterised by a large question mark. Both of the phrases popular at that time, the "Woman Question" and the "New Woman", are indicative of a sense of flux surrounding gender issues. Cabot was not immune to this; in her earlier suffrage articles she had written of an "ideal of womanhood" which "we must uphold and keep steadily before us", and which she viewed as "being re-cast for us in our nineteenth-century" ("Do Women Need the Suffrage?" CT 21 Sept. 1893, 35). Throughout the "Ladies' Page" she speaks often of the necessity of "moulding" the young woman, and preaches endlessly on the need for self-examination. Clearly she had in her own mind a set model of femininity which she felt all women should aspire to emulate. The "Ladies' Page" is her spring-board for communicating her ideal to womanhood at large.

The "editorial we" is Cabot's most subtle instrument for achieving this, if perhaps the most unconsciously employed. In one editorial she writes "What will stimulate the thinking part of us, and give us a purer mental atmosphere?"

Nothing, except books We must make a choice, for the good and bad books are mingled on every side. *Our* book must be a book of "moral avoirdupois" - one that shall kindle and rouse, not enervate and stultify. (10 May 1894, 9)

Undoubtedly nothing of the sort has ever occurred to a significant number of her readers but the “we”, encompassing the greater “sisterhood”, potently suggests that if “we” are not thinking this “we” certainly should be; otherwise one is not essentially part of the privileged membership of the “Ladies’ Page”. In fact, what it really implies is that if one is sensible enough to select the *Canterbury Times* “Ladies’ Page” for one’s reading material, one is evidently sensible enough to resist the folly of others and the risk of being cast into the “great unthinking majority”. With Cabot’s constant emphasis upon the “thinking woman”, and her personal alignment with notions of “good sense” and practicality, everything presented in the “Ladies’ Page” is rendered as that which all intelligent women would, and should, adopt. An example of this is Cabot’s comment upon the foolishness of English women in pinning their watches to the outside of their dresses. Declaring that it is an obvious enticement to robbery, and praising the colonial woman for not following suit, Cabot writes “let *us* now hope that the fashion has received its death blow” ([my italics] HT 21 Jan. 1897, 4).

Cabot’s authority as editor is frequently translated into an imperative or enjoinder to do something, ranging in magnitude from the directive that women should take every opportunity to improve their “mental atmosphere” to the instruction that one should brush one’s hair at least once a month. In this respect the relationship between editor and reader becomes unequal, Cabot assuming a superiority of knowledge and expertise, and fulfilling the role of guide and mentor. Other topics include child-care, the responsibilities of the hostess, the making of pickles, the curing of bunions, care of table-linen, matters of fashion and etiquette, and the cultivation of self-discipline and good temper. The diversity of this selection reinforces John Berger’s statement that “Woman must continually watch herself” and that “she is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself” (qtd in Waldron 6), for all of these activities are associated with facets of “womanliness”. Implicit in every instruction is the suggestion that it is of imperative importance to every “true woman” to act it out. Cabot’s authority to make such judgements, whether implied or actual, is justified by her position and by the newspaper’s own explicit reference to her in

their advertising as an "expert" providing "literature of the highest class for the home".

Aside from the editorial "we" and the direct enjoinder to act, gender enculturation occurs simply through the array of topics presented as being of specifically feminine interest or concern. Female readers are encouraged to believe that the content of the "Ladies' Page" reflects normative feminine beliefs and behaviour, and the content therefore contributes to shaping the expectations women may have in their own lives. Each of the articles and editorials presented in the "Ladies' Page" may be broadly classified as falling into one of eight categories: weddings and marriage; domestic (relating to household care and motherhood); health and beauty; fashion; Society and gossip; music and literature; fiction; and the Women's Movement. With the exception of the Women's Movement (the discussion of which will be left until the fourth chapter), all of these categories are the subject areas of traditional women's media. In line with most other autonomous or semi-autonomous women's newspaper sections, issues relating to the "hard news" of the day are either completely avoided or presented from a feminised perspective (Tuchmann et. al. 4). References to the Boer War, for example, appear in the fashion column (khaki was the most fashionable colour to be worn during the war period), in articles on interior decorating, and amidst romantic tales of love and heroism.

While the subject categories of the "Ladies' Page" may easily be defined, however, their presentation is not as straightforward. To begin with the material does not originate from a common source. As stated earlier, Cabot frequently publishes articles from international periodicals and in some issues of the "Ladies' Page" the "Here and There" and "Woman's Diary" columns represent the only original content. This inevitably gives rise to inherent contradictions. There is also the natural heterogeneity that arises in any periodical text which seeks to appeal to a general readership; even within the narrow confines of traditional feminine subjects there is space for disagreement. The greatest potential for this in the context of the "Ladies' Page" lies in Cabot's earnest endeavour to attract both a conservative, older audience and the new generation of modern women.

Further ambiguity is created by the umbrella objective of the *Canterbury Times* itself, which may have served to depersonalise the style of the newspaper's writers. Again, this is an inherent element of all newspaper production, as illustrated by Leslie Stephen's description of the "editorial we":

the "we" means something very real and potent. As soon as he [the writer] puts on the mantle, he finds that an indefinable change has come over his whole method of thinking and expressing himself. He is no longer an individual but the mouth-piece of an oracle. He catches some inflection of style, and feels that although he may believe what he says, it is not the independent outcome of his own private idiosyncrasy. (qtd in Brake 87)

It has already been noted that Cabot's "editorial we" is used to a different effect than that customarily ascribed, and given the cultural significance of her position, it may be questioned whether she did feel herself to be the "mouth-piece of an oracle" or more a privileged guest, equal to but different from her male colleagues. It could be argued that the "mantle" Cabot wears is in fact the tradition of women's media, and that she was employed by the *Canterbury Times* with that intention.

Amidst these counter-interests and agendas it becomes difficult to precisely define Cabot's "voice". At which point does she truly enter the text and at which point depart? To what extent is she the dispassionate observer, the mouth-piece of someone else's rendering, or the active and engaged commentator? Arguably the cultural work of Cabot and the cultural work of the "Ladies' Page" are both connected and distinct. The areas in which the greatest discrepancy occurs are fashion, and Society and gossip; but as will be seen there are elements of contradiction in other material also. The intention of this chapter is to provide a sample of all the material presented by the "Ladies Page", whether written by Cabot or not, and the points of opposition will be highlighted and discussed.

Marriage is a frequent topic in the "Ladies' Page". As well as the regular "Weddings" column, which describes recent local alliances, there are a considerable number of articles relating generally to

courtship, wedding arrangements, and the state of married life. The following may all be found in the sample issues: "Men Girls Elope With" ([*English Paper*] 14 Jan. 1897, 4), "How to Manage a Husband" (14 Jan. 1897, 5), "Are Engagements Tests of Love?" ([*Pearson's Weekly*] 14 Jan. 1897, 6), "Strangely Interrupted Honeymoons" (14 Jan. 1897, 6), "Amenities of Married Life" ([*English Paper*] 28 Jan. 1897, 8), "Brides on the Battlefield" (6 June 1900, 6), "Curious Marriage Ceremonies" (13 June 1900, 7), "The First Wedding in Canterbury" (20 June 1900, 8), "The Age to Marry" (20 June 1900, 8), "The American Husband" (27 June 1900, 8), "Some Happy Literary Marriages" ([*Tit-Bits*] 5 August 1903, 5), "Brides of Today" ([*Daily Chronicle*] 12 Sept. 1906, 72), and "Too Old to Love at Thirty: Why so Many Men Miss Matrimony" ([*Daily Mail*] 19 Sept. 1906, 76).

The sheer number of these articles²³ indicates the expectation that all members of the female audience are married or will be married in the near future (this perceived status quo is also reflected in the fiction section, where, in the majority of cases, the story-line focuses upon either the heroine's experience of married life or the ordeals of courtship). The articles fall roughly into three types: serious articles aimed at prospective brides, which offer advice on how to go about one's engagement and wedding, and what to expect of matrimony; humorous representations of married life, which the experienced may empathise with or be amused by; and romanticised stories of conjugal devotion and sacrifice. All together they contribute to a sense that marriage is the pre-eminent subject in women's minds. They speak of marriage as being the ultimate aim of all women and in some instances suggest that it is the high-point of feminine existence. The writer of "Are Engagements Tests of Love?" (*Pearson's Weekly*) states:

Girls look with brightness and cheerfulness to the day when they will become engaged. It is the one event of their lives. They are enraptured when in the due course of time their wish is fulfilled, and they see sparkling on their finger the much-coveted engagement ring. (14 Jan. 1897, 6)

²³ Note that these are taken from a month's worth of "Ladies' Pages" every three years for thirteen years, so the actual number of marriage-related articles for the entire period is potentially very high.

The article suggests that it is the wedding itself, rather than the prospective groom, that forms the chief preoccupation for women and that a marriage alliance is a somewhat arbitrary affair. It is the writer's conviction that women are too frivolous when choosing a partner and too inclined to be carried away by romantic idealism. This is not to say that they are seeking perfect love in a relationship but that they are excessively concerned with their friends' opinions of their fiancés (in matters of wealth and social standing, for example), the finery of their wedding attire, and the contents of their trousseau. Next to these considerations there is very little thought for the stern reality of wedlock. The writer questions:

Does the modern engaged girl fully realise that she is about to become the wife of a man of whom she knows in reality - except in rare cases - but very little?
(14 Jan. 1897, 6)

The writer is clearly addressing the middle-class girl rather than the lower-class girl, and conveys that there is an unhealthy utilitarian element in middle-class marriage alliances, where pecuniary or social advantage take precedence over considerations of love and compatibility.

The arbitrariness of marriage matches is also communicated by the article "How to Manage a Husband" [By a Wife Who is Happily Married], which suggests that finding one's life-time partner is a matter of pot-luck. The author is writing tongue-in-cheek but also with an element of truth when she states "we have, as a rule, to take the one [husband] provided or who graciously singles us out" (14 Jan. 1897, 5). The origins of the article are unclear but the author may be specifically referring to the New Zealand "marriage market" and the much lower proportion of men to women in the fifteen to thirty-five age group. Socially this would have created an anxiety and uncertainty about one's marriage prospects and perhaps contributed to ill-considered and hasty alliances. It appears from many of the articles, however, that women in both England and New Zealand were inclined to marry hastily, whether because they were carried away by the supposed glamour and romance of marriage or because they feared spinsterhood.

This is an area where a sense of opposition or heterogeneity is apparent, for while the writer of the first article stresses the necessity of thought and care in choosing a partner, in other parts of the "Ladies' Page" the glamour and romance of marriage are deliberately foregrounded. Feminine success is equated with one's ability to attract and secure a husband and in various instances marriage is cast as a rite of passage, the moment at which the young girl finally enters into her full "womanly" inheritance. One writer poetically describes the process thus: "Her girlish ways drop from her like her girlish gowns; she is the full-fledged married woman" ("Brides of Today" [*Daily Chronicle*, by Lady Violet Greville] 12 Sept. 1906, 72). Marriage is a point of maturity, heralding the new phase in which the glorified "inherent" qualities of motherhood and domestic virtue will blossom into fruition. Adding further appeal, the "Weddings" column highlights every artistic detail of other people's weddings, which cannot help but inspire envy and anticipation in the average single nineteenth-century girl.

Within the same text, therefore, may be found material that warns young women against an infatuated approach to marriage and also that which feeds infatuation. Cabot does not directly pass judgement on any of these articles; she may criticise statements she has heard or read elsewhere but with regard to the content of the "Ladies' Page" any criticism of syndicated material is veiled or implicit. Cabot's own editorial comments on love suggest she is in favour of the more thoughtful and considered approach to marriage. She notes that there are many reasons for people marrying, such as for a living, for convenience, for companionship, or from vanity, and she dismisses all of them as being of insufficient importance. She claims that love, however, is all-sufficient, representing the "true touch-stone" of marriage (HT 31 May 1894, 7), and defines it in such a way as to suggest an equality between the sexes. True love, Cabot states, is "that intelligent and mutual respect and sympathy, that unity of thought and aim, that blending of two in one, which makes each ready for any sacrifice or even to die for the other - a union which neither time nor accident can destroy". It is not romantic love that Cabot writes of, or "love at first sight"; these are instances in which she feels the word "love" to be erroneously applied: "many fall in "love", as they call it, with a different person every day, and poor perverted creatures who do not know the real

meaning of the word, commit suicide for 'love'" (HT 31 May 1894, 7). The love which she most frequently refers to is that which has withstood the test of time:

although the love of beauty is charming and picturesque, the love of old age is radiant with beauty. To see two human creatures who have weathered together in closest communion all the storms and ills of life, battered and deformed by time, yet able to look into each other's eyes with a love surpassing that of their first affection is a sight grander than any other the world can show. (HT 31 May 1894, 7)

Because of her belief that marriage should be a union of "true minds", Cabot is more wary in her approach to matrimony, cautioning "don't marry, fearing to be left; for 'an unclaimed treasure' is happier than 'a repenting wife'" ("Don'ts for the Girls of the Present Day" 28 Jan. 1897, 8). Comments such as these, as well as the significant emphasis placed upon love, may also have been intended to reassure single women that the fact they had not married by a certain age was not a cause for panic. Many Christchurch women of the 1890s would have been in this position because of the discrepancy in the distribution of the sexes; Cabot herself was one of them. If the importance of having the "right" man could be emphasised over the importance of simply having a man, the state of spinsterhood might be made more appealing, or at least less painful. "The Age to Marry" ([*Truth*, by Madge] 20 June 1900, 8) provides further reassurance in this direction by describing late marriage as fashionable. "Fifteen years ago a girl was considered to be rather *passee* at twenty-six, and quite laid upon the shelf, labelled 'spinster' at twenty-eight", but now, says "Madge", "a woman who marries at forty excites very little remark". It is recommended that the more fastidious women with high ideals about marriage should wait until they are at least twenty-five or even thirty, while those of a "high culture and romantic disposition" should wait until the age of twenty-seven or twenty-eight. "Madge" concludes by saying that according to the current trend, very few women are marrying in their teens, more than usual between twenty-four and twenty-five, while "quite as many brides

are over thirty as under". As well as relieving the social pressure upon young women to marry, this article contrasts to others by intimating that marriage is not something that "happens" to a woman but something which she may have control over, deciding for or against it, according to whether she feels ready. It is a modern approach which reflects more realistically the growing independence of young women.

Perhaps because of her own situation Cabot shows a greater awareness than many of the article writers of the growing pool of unmarried women, or the "ever-increasing class of girl-bachelors" as she describes them. Intermittently she provides practical and economical advice expressly for their benefit. In "A Gas Griller for Girl Bachelors" (6 June 1900, 7), for example, she recommends a cheap and efficient method of cooking for one. Such articles are a concession to the fact that the picture painted by the "Ladies' Page" is not always an accurate portrayal of reality and that many women may not, in fact, realistically entertain the expectation of marriage. They also represent glimmers of social change. Now that there were wider job opportunities available to them, many women were delaying marriage and motherhood in favour of enjoying a period of independence. They established flats on their own and pursued careers, and were naturally as desirous of practical advice as any other reader of the "Ladies' Page". Cabot's content heralds a growing recognition of these developments and a sensitivity to different readers' wants and needs.

In spite of her own lack of experience in this area, Cabot describes at length the duties of the wife and the proper relationship (aside from a basis of love) between spouses. Upon this subject there is greater consensus between Cabot and other writers appearing in the "Page", as all of them agree on the traditional bourgeois role of the wife. In all relationships they share, but especially in marriage, women are presented as the essential helpmeets who hold the responsibility of ensuring the comfort and happiness of those around them. The home is the wife's primary domain and within this environment she must see that all of her husband's wants are well-met: she must cook him wholesome and delicious meals, see to the washing and mending of his clothing, soothe his ailments, and cleverly and efficiently budget his wages. Most importantly, however, she must be a cheerful companion and support, ever ready

to alleviate his worries without contributing burdens of her own. In the editorial of 6 June 1900 Cabot writes:

It is ... possible to train ourselves to forget our failures and troubles, and the habit, once formed, goes on strengthening until no effort is required to maintain cheerfulness under all and any circumstances. When this stage is attained the greatest secret of life has been learned. Henceforth we can diffuse pleasure around us. (HT 5)

Cabot is speaking generally of women here, as all women are expected to bring the same cheerful solicitude to their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and friends. The early family environment is frequently presented as the training-ground where virtue should be practised until it becomes habit.²⁴ This is explicitly illustrated in Cabot's instruction not to forget "that a sister has the power to make her brother feel that she will be a comfort and a helpmeet to her husband if she marries" ("Don'ts for the Girls of the Present Day" 28 Jan. 1897, 8).

The expected wifely pampering of the male breadwinner is perhaps best exemplified in the article entitled "The Unsocial Club of Women" ([*Gentlewoman*] 21 Jan. 1897, 7). Having forsaken the gaiety and triviality of Society, the members of the said club are described as having dedicated themselves entirely to their husbands and families:

They believe that the man, the breadwinner and wage-earner of the house ... has rights, and of these (sic) is the right to be comfortable, to have some things as he wants them, some things cooked to his taste, a comfortable lounge or chair in a favourite corner, his bed by the east window, if he likes it thus; his coffee hot on winter mornings; the house quiet when he is weary and worried and sleeps lightly. This

²⁴ In spite of her own belief that virtue numbers amongst woman's "natural instincts and impulses", Cabot spends much time in stressing the importance of its acquisition.

is one of the cardinal beliefs of the Club of Unsocial Women.

While it is written humorously, "How to Manage a Husband" [By a Wife who is Happily Married] presents a similar scenario of married life, the wife expending all energy in service to her spouse:

The one great help towards keeping a husband happy and good tempered is to make matters go smoothly and comfortably ... He will bear a great trouble nobly, perhaps; but life to him will not be worth living if his shaving water is cold, his boots unpolished, and his meals badly cooked and unpunctual. And, above all, the housekeeping money must be "made to do".
(14 Jan. 1897, 5)

For the most part these duties to the husband are presented as a source of pride and a measure of personal value and self-worth. Regardless of one's talents in other areas, the assiduousness with which one serves one's husband is ever the more meritorious. Mrs. Norman, author of *The Girl in the Carpathians* and a renowned cook, is described by Cabot as being "prouder of her success with the stewpan than with her pen. It is said ... that it was a delicately cooked and daintily served little dinner of hers that so impressed Mr. Norman as to make him propose to her on the spot" (HT 14 Jan. 1897, 4).

In many instances the wife is glorified as being the source of men's strength, enabling them to achieve greater feats than they would otherwise - whether engaged in the battles of war or daily life. This is usually the subject matter of the third category of marriage articles. American womanhood, for example, is credited with supplying the base strength for the establishment of the United States, although it is acknowledged that this occurred at the expense of their "womanliness", or feminine delicacy. Cabot writes:

All Europe knows that the unwomanliness of [America's] women is one of the heavy prices that Americans pay for some of the unprecedentedly great features of their civilisation. (HT 5 Sept. 1906, 71)

Perhaps the most remarkable feat of wifely devotion is that portrayed in "Brides on the Battlefield: How Cupid Laughs at War" ([*Tit-Bits*] 6 June 1900, 6). Mrs. Jessie Noster, the epitome of feminine self-sacrifice, is described as not only accompanying her husband's regiment to the Philippines and tending the wounded as an agent of the Red Cross, but triumphantly producing a baby boy:

At San Pedro Macati she took her place with [her husband] in the trenches, and at the Battle of Paca Church, when the hospital was surrounded by the enemy, she succoured the wounded and carried ammunition through a perfect deluge of bullets. When volunteers were required for an expedition of great danger ... she was one of the hundred accepted, and narrowly escaped with her life. But she escaped unscathed through all these dangers, and when she again landed on American soil she brought with her a baby boy, ... born on the field of battle.

Aside from wifely duty, much information is presented in the "Ladies' Page" that relates more generally to domesticity, offering instruction and advice on both household care and motherhood. Often adding a paradoxical element to the romanticised images of love and marriage, housework is portrayed by Cabot as a trying, seven-days-a-week occupation. "Day in and day out is passed in baking, mending and sweeping", she writes, lamenting the "awful monotony" of these duties and the "somber, never-changing dulness (sic)" of the housewife's existence: "Put a man in a woman's place and he would be ready to fly before seven days had passed over his head" (HT 24 May 1894, 7). Yet Cabot sees women as rising naturally to these tasks and bearing their burden stoically, being "so terribly conscientious that no consideration of self will induce them to neglect the pile of stockings awaiting the darning needle, and take a walk in the fresh morning sunshine instead".

The primary source of instruction on household care is the regular "Household Hints" column, which contains an exhaustive range of advice in all areas of domestic management. Recipes appear most frequently, covering a wide selection of mains, desserts,

dainties, pickles, sauces and chutneys, as well as helpful tips for serving cold meat and left-overs. Other recipes for more toxic concoctions also appear, such as "Sachet Powder for Moths" and fly poison (HH 21 Jan. 1897, 8). In addition to these are instructions for such tasks as filling floor cracks, using flour, alum water and newspaper (HH 6 June 1900, 9); removing grass stains from clothing with moistened cream of tartar or alcohol (HH 5 Aug. 1903, 9); keeping cow's milk fresh with chunks of horse-radish (HH 5 Aug. 1903, 9); and the recycling of coal dust by mixing it with clay and paraffin (HH 5 Aug. 1903, 9). The main emphasis is upon keeping things clean and pristine. For the hearth-stone and door-step, which apparently required daily attention, Cabot suggests mixing whitening with milk and a little washing blue (HH 28 Jan. 1897, 8; 2 Sept. 1907, 76); for cleaning the gas stove, a kerosene-moistened cloth and a bicycle pump are recommended (HH 2 Sept. 1907, 76); while for revitalising old black shoes, Cabot advises the application of equal parts of sweet oil, treacle and lamp black (HH 13 June 1900, 9).

Given that Cabot is pitching much of her material at the level of a middle-class audience (as will be more thoroughly illustrated in the following chapter), the array of chores she describes is unusual: few middle-class English women would be personally acquainted with the difficulties of doorstep cleaning or the scrubbing of the stove. The "Household Hints" column appears, in fact, to be one of the few sections of the "Ladies' Page" indicative of a mixed class readership, but it also shows a sensitivity to two important factors of colonial life: the shortage of domestic servants in middle-class homes, and the necessity for many women living in isolated areas to simply "make do" with the resources at hand. Wevers describes New Zealand women as exercising a remarkable self-sufficiency, manufacturing all manner of household items (244-245), and Cabot's column corroborates this by suggesting that there was a strong need amongst her readers for practical, economical, and time-saving solutions, as well as a significant amount of cunning ingenuity.

Although she frequently expresses a faith in women's "natural" domestic ability, towards the end of the century Cabot shows increasing concern at the "Servant Problem" and the gap this revealed in the domestic knowledge of middle-class women especially. Various comments by Cabot and syndicated articles, such as "Domestic Evolution" ([*St. James's Budget*] 21 Jan. 1897, 6),

indicate that it was a growing problem in England and Western Europe also and a fond topic of women's media internationally. Commenting on the New Zealand situation, Cabot writes that the "servant girl trouble ... has reached the acute stage in our colony ... and the wail of the mistress is heard in the land":

Nor are there any signs of deliverance visible, not even from the schools of cookery, which seemed to promise so much. Little by little the deft and clean "general" has disappeared out of ken. (HT 20 June 1900, 5)

This suggests that while many middle-class women had adapted with versatility to the new environment, there were still a large number who relied upon the assistance of servants. Cabot's solution is that housework be valued as it deserves to be and raised to the status of a profession or science, becoming a certificated occupation as had occurred with nursing: "mistresses must go servantless or educated women must step into the kitchen and elevate the status of the household worker" (HT 20 June 1900, 5).

Cabot is reproachful of the women who choose factory work over domestic service, as they are not only neglecting an important area of their own development into good wives and mothers, but are also neglecting an occupation which is of infinitely greater benefit to human-kind:

At present the girl who has gone straight from the fourth standard to a factory, who is unable to boil an egg or make a scone ... will adopt a condescending air towards the cook There is something wrong here. The cook is a benefactress, she is building up strong, healthy men and women to do good work in the world. (HT 5 Sept. 1906, 71)

Cabot is, however, equally reproachful of the middle-class scorn for domestic servants that has impelled this disregard, claiming that terms such as "servant" and "slavey" "should be ruthlessly put down" (HT 5 Sept. 1906, 71). In response to the question "How can a gentlewoman help to raise the tone of domestic service?" (*Woman*),

she makes the radical and contentious reply "Gentlewoman servants" (HT 28 Jan. 1897, 4). For Cabot there is no shame in this; the only shame for a woman, whether middle- or lower-class, lies in the ignorance of domestic skill.

As will be observed from the dates, Cabot lobbied for a long time to bring about these social changes, using her influence as editor of the "Ladies' Page" to advance a progressive line of thought. While her ideas for the professionalisation of housework were never implemented, the prolonged force and vehemence of her opinions must have contributed to some degree in re-shaping women's attitudes. Again, Cabot's comments reflect an element of social change: the fully-serviced middle-class household was gradually giving way to the household solely cared for by wife and mother. Cabot was ever at hand to supply the necessary aid to accommodate this transition.

The subject of motherhood occupies a much less prominent position in the "Ladies' Page" but is emphasised as holding an unrivalled importance in women's lives. Following the traditional beliefs of the mother as moral guardian and educator, Cabot speaks of the necessity of women's fitting themselves for the "responsibility of being the priestesses and mothers of nations" (HT 14 Jan. 1897, 4). On a similar note, in one of her early editorials she publishes the words of a New York doctor who describes child-rearing as a civic function, as important as that performed by the school teacher or "'the instructor who trains the soldiers and sailors of the country'" (HT 31 May 1894, 8). This is an impersonal and wide-scale view of motherhood, which was common to late nineteenth-century imperialist rhetoric. Women are charged with the task of ensuring the integrity, virtue and stability of the future generations, for the sake of the nation, empire, and human-kind. It was also a common rhetoric of feminist discourse, and invariably Cabot uses it when seeking to justify women's involvement in education and employment. She argues that such a highly important social role as motherhood surely requires women to be better prepared. Hence, she is invoking a discourse which is not essentially concerned with motherhood for its own sake.

Standing in blunt contrast to the futuristic vision of an idealised maternity is a more localised perspective encompassing the mundane and daily concerns of child-care. There are editorials on

creating wholesome yet appetizing meals for young children (HT 7 Jan. 1897, 4); how to discourage the habit of spitting in boys (HT 14 Jan. 1897, 4); and the fact that children's nightmares are often an indicator of more serious ailments (HT 27 June 1900, 5). Amongst the full-length articles in the sample there are pieces entitled "A Mid-Day Sleep Improves Baby's Temper" (13 June 1900, 9), "The Best Way of Bringing Up a Child: Discipline and How to Ensure Gratitude" (25 Sept. 1907, 73), and "Garden Perils: Flowers Children Should Not Touch" (25 Sept. 1907, 73). Aside from these few articles child-care is perhaps best represented by the advertising in the "Ladies' Page", which frequently displays baby food or products for curing infant ailments. Advertisements for "Cuticura Resolvent and Soap" appear regularly, accompanied by a picture of mother and child and the slogan "BABY LIKES IT"; and "Neave's Food" for infants and children, "Bonnington's Irish Moss" ("pleasant for children"), and Fyfe & Cummings' "Babies' Complete Outfit" parcels are also constantly featured.

The article "Motherhood: Its Privileges and Responsibilities" ([*Ladies' Home Journal*] 14 Jan. 1897, 5) suggests a reason for the comparative lack of information by drawing attention to the fact that many middle-class English children were cared for by wet-nurses. Hence, there may not have been many middle-class magazine articles available on the subject of child-care for Cabot to use. The writer of the above article criticises the practice of having a wet-nurse, emphasising the importance of close contact between a child and its mother. This would appear to be Cabot's own view, as in the second issue following the article she publishes an editorial upon the impressionability of children and advocates attentive parental care:

it is in infancy and early childhood that the mind is most sensitive to impressions. How zealously then must we guard against allowing wrong impressions, which undoubtedly influence the whole after-career of the child! (HT 28 Jan. 1897, 4)

Subjects relating to health and beauty are highly prominent in the "Ladies' Page", reflecting a mixture of innovation and tradition. Advice on personal grooming was a long-established and popular

element of women's media, but the emphasis Cabot places upon fitness and healthy exercise is a product of the Women's Movement. Along with the desire for greater educational freedom, many women wished for less restraint upon their physical activity, and the late nineteenth-century witnessed the advance of the "fair sex" into all manner of sporting pursuits.²⁵ For women as well as men sound mental health became synonymous with sound physical health. According to Cabot this developed into a health fad in the 1890s in both England and America (HT 24 May 1894, 8). In Cabot's own words, "women do more, achieve more than ever before and consequently, they care more to hear how they may keep themselves in proper condition for work" (HT 24 May 1894, 8). Cabot is evidently an ardent supporter of these developments, and adds her own approbation and encouragement by suggesting further expansions women might make:

Why not fencing for women? We have our Indian clubs and dumbbells, our swimming baths and bicycles, our tennis, golf, and rowing, but as yet we have neglected one of the most successful means of promoting our physical well-being. It is, I am firmly convinced, woman's first duty to herself to maintain her health and beauty. (HT 24 May 1894, 8)

Frequently Cabot cites the findings of scientists and doctors on the role of exercise in disease prevention. In the 20 July 1900 issue, for example, she writes that tobogganing is considered to be the "most delightful remedy for dyspepsia and for renewing nerve force" and that cycling is claimed to provide a cure for alcoholism, neurasthenia and melancholia. Skating is especially recommended for women (the reason unspecified), as is walking in the fresh air (HT 5). "Prevention of disease is always easier than its cure", says

²⁵ Canterbury women are described by Haig and Barnett (22-23) as being involved in a variety of activities, including croquet, tennis, hockey, cricket, golf, swimming, mountaineering, and horse-riding. In 1884 Christchurch Girls High began teaching gymnastics; and in 1892 the Atlanta Cycling Club was established for Christchurch ladies. It was dissolved in 1897 but was highly influential in encouraging women to cycle - whether on their own or with friends, in recreation, or as a form of transport. The C.W.I. also had a health department with a special Dress and Athletics section for encouraging these developments (Lovell-Smith 15).

Cabot, "and this knowledge should make our course of action clear. We should aim with all our strength at cultivating health by means of one or other form of exercise - always in open air" (HT 5).

Many of the comments on health are specifically directed at the housewife, who spends all of her waking moments caring for others and doing heavy housework without any consideration for herself. "How the Housewife May Keep Fit" (25 Sept. 1907, 72) is representative of Cabot's concern for these women and provides many simple exercises that may be executed while engaged in cleaning.

The most important aspect of exercise, aside from increasing one's mental and physical vigour and preventing the onset of illness, is in imparting beauty to the individual. Cabot writes that one ostensible reason for the new exercise craze is that "women are beginning to find that there is no real beauty without sound health" (HT 24 May 1894, 8). Whenever promoting an exercise herself she is quick to emphasise its beautifying benefits; fencing, for instance, is defined as the pre-eminent "art for learning grace", ensuring "a flexibility and elasticity that react on the mind and promote the happy temperament so many women strive for":

there is nothing like it to add to the charms of a beautiful woman or to give grace and charm to one who is not strictly good looking. (HT 24 May 1894, 8)

Throughout the "Ladies' Pages" beauty is cast as a necessary and all-important quality of "womanliness" and there is a pervasive insistence that women should aim to be as decorative and pleasing to the eye as possible. This is partly attributed to women's responsibilities in alleviating the concerns of others (their attractiveness will serve to lift the spirits of those around them), but also reflects a socially prescribed definition of femininity. The cultivation of attractiveness is not regarded by Cabot as vanity but, in fact, "our plain duty" (HT 25 Sept. 1907, 71) and although she writes pityingly of the "worthy dowd", she cautions that there is no excuse for such "unnecessary ugliness":

Beauty, afterall, is not so much a matter of features as of form and carriage and there is immense comfort

for the plainest woman under the sun in the fact that we can quite easily acquire this form and carriage. We can straighten round shoulders, pose the head properly, walk with ease and grace, dress our hair prettily. (HT 25 Sept. 1907, 71)

As well as asserting that beauty is an obligation for every woman, Cabot posits distinct definitions of what that beauty should be. Assuming an imperative tone she declares that the eyebrows, for example, "ought to be immovable graceful arches dignifying the face and imparting a tremendous amount of character" ("Eyes and Eyebrows" 18 June 1900, 7). "If not naturally so, [they] can often be gently coaxed and trained to look more presentable", but one should never raise one's eyebrows to affect an "arch" expression, for this is "unnatural, ungraceful, destroys the symmetry of the features and induces a prematurely aged and wrinkled forehead".

Cabot strongly objects to practices which are dangerous, such as the overlacing of corsets or the use of poisonous cosmetic substances, and her emphasis tends to fall upon natural beauty rather than artificial effects; but there is still a sense that the body must be shaped and styled according to current fashion. In pursuit of this Cabot provides instruction on every area of grooming. There are numerous articles on care for the hair, teeth, feet, finger-nails and complexion, as well as medical advice on diet, digestion and the importance of sleep. Cabot herself concedes that the "standard of women's beauty varies greatly from time to time" (HT 26 Sept. 1906, 71) but does so without any apparent awareness that it is media such as the "Ladies' Page" that is responsible for setting and changing those standards. At times she maintains a distance from information concerning beauty and fashion which accentuates a sense that she is merely a vehicle for its transmission, rather than owning any responsibility for its publication. She will express personal opinions on the merit or folly of a certain trend but the overall sense is that fashion is a power unto itself, under the imposition of which all women must labour - whether for good or ill - if they are to maintain a respectable femininity.

The situation is the same with Cabot's presentation of sartorial fashion, which receives an equally large amount of attention in the "Ladies' Page". There is a regular fashion column, variously titled

"Frills of Fashion" or "Fashions and Frivolities", and a plethora of additional articles to supplement this. Titles relating to the subject include "The Redeeming Feature of a Fashionable Dress" (10 May 1894, 10), "The Coming Styles" (24 May 1894, 8), "Fashionable Fabrics" (17 May 1894, 9), "Hats, Bonnets and Toques" (14 Jan. 1897, 7), "Dresses of Sovereign Ladies" (13 June 1900, 7), "The Art of Dressing at Small Cost" ([*Harper's Bazar*] 26 Sept. 1906, 73), and "Smart Fashions for the Equestrienne" (5 Sept. 1906, 76). Within these columns and articles the latest trends from London and Paris are minutely described by Cabot, from the current styles in sleeves and bodices to the appropriate shoes, stockings, buttons and buckles to be worn in accompaniment. Both exhaustive and exquisitely detailed, such descriptions elevate the simple act of attiring one's self to the level of a performance art. They create an image of femininity that is ethereal, lavish and extravagant, and an ideal of attractiveness characterised by softness, intricacy and elegance. Given that many of the fashions originate from the theatres and royal courts of Europe, this is unsurprising, although they seem to bear little relevance to the realities of life in the New Zealand bush or the economic exigencies of the colonial housewife.

Cabot apparently holds this opinion herself, for outside of the articles and columns specifically concerning fashion she is often dismissive of the subject, deploring the ephemerality, impracticality and cost of the ever-changing trends. In one editorial she expresses strong disapproval of the frivolousness shown in the Queen's drawing rooms:

Although there may be a kind of fascination for many in the lists of costly dresses worn by England's daughters at this stately function, yet for thinking women there is mingled some wonder at the perpetuation of such an extravagant tradition. The thousands of pounds that English women spend annually in this sacrifice to fashion would go far to provide London's street arabs with a warm coat or a satisfying meal. (HT 3 May 1894, 5)

In another editorial the fashionable English bride who substitutes the customary white satin robe for a "simple walking dress" is

praised by Cabot for her good sense, and hope is expressed that colonial women will follow suit. She laments that New Zealand women generally "are far too ready to copy the extravagances in dress of their more wealthy sisters at Home":

a spirit of unhealthy emulation has grown up amongst us, and when Miss A. plans her wedding gown, she does it with an eye to its description in the ladies' column of the newspaper, rather than to the capacity of her purse. (HT 7 Jan. 1897, 4)

This again seems to imply a lack of awareness in Cabot of her own complicity in encouraging such behaviour. Alternatively, however, her statement could be said to show an acute awareness and an earnest, if implicit, desire to warn women of the importance of discernment, even when reading her own work. While she may personally be diametrically opposed to the subject, Cabot is compelled to include a fashion section because it is a staple ingredient of women's media and because it is expected by her readers. Trial and error in British women's magazines had shown that it was requisite, and this was to be proven true in the New Zealand context also with the demise of *Daybreak*. The editors of *Daybreak* refused to publish a fashion section on principle and suffered collapse as a consequence. Female readers wanted to be informed of the latest trends and for middle-class women especially, the emphasis upon outward appearance and conspicuous consumption rendered it a necessity. In the isolated environment of New Zealand information on fashion was particularly important in enabling readers to keep abreast with the proper elements of feminine decorum at "Home".

The greatest cause for confusion lies in the fact that within the fashion section, Cabot appears to be sympathetically and personally engaged. Rather than simply listing fashion items she expresses her own opinions upon current trends and impresses a necessity of keeping abreast of them. At one instance she writes: "one might as well be buried as not wear a Japanese sleeve ... for the Japanese effect is so quickly arranged that a last year's bodice can be brought up to date at comparatively little cost" (FF 2 Oct. 1907, 72). This sense of

feminine enthrallment is also communicated by her comments on lace:

After the infinite variety of shades of yellow we have had in the lace world, in Paris, string, ecrû, butter and coffee shades, we hear with relief that pure white, and ivory-white lace, tulle, chiffon and net are again popular. (FF 2 Oct. 1907, 72)

Additionally it may be noted that the fashion column is generally executed with flair and eloquence, often evoking a sense of pleasurable indulgence rather than tedium or disapprobation. And far from limiting fashion comments strictly to their appropriate column, Cabot frequently has appearance-oriented material in her editorials.

A further solution to this dilemma of contradiction may lie in Cabot's support of the Women's Movement. Internationally, suffragists and feminists were frequently caricaturised in the press in a way that encouraged viewers to see them as universally plain or ugly, wrinkled, stern, unbecomingly dressed, and sometimes even masculine.²⁶ In brief, they were cast as the epitome of "unwomanliness". In England this impelled many suffragists to make appearance a focal point of their campaign and to distinguish themselves as far as possible from the dowdy spinster and the dress reformer (Tickner 166). It was an area where treading the path of conservatism presented itself as the safest and most effective course. As will be shown in Chapter Four, Cabot clearly identified herself with the Women's Movement and promoted its successes in the "Ladies' Page". It may be that she deliberately emphasised certain material to enforce the notion that "womanliness" could be reconciled with "progressiveness", and that the New Woman need not be "mannish" or unattractive.

Cabot's stance on Society happenings and "gossip" is similarly ambiguous. She publishes articles and editorial comments which critique Society events as inane, superfluous and an impediment to the cultivation of "womanly" virtue; yet at the same time the

²⁶ For examples of nineteenth-century English anti-suffrage post-cards, posters and cartoons, see Lisa Tickner's *The Spectacle of Woman*. (London: Chatto and Windus), 1987.

description of such events is a prominent and recurring feature. "Woman's Diary" (later titled "Social Round") is a regular column in the "Ladies' Page" that routinely lists every major ball, picnic, fête, flower show, opera, concert and afternoon-tea that has occurred, or will occur in the near future. They are described sympathetically, with great elaboration and detail, and it appears from Cabot's writing that she was a participant at each and every one of them as she communicates a personal enjoyment. Describing a "cup and saucer" tea given at Mrs. Stead's in honour of a "bride-elect", Cabot writes:

The dining and morning-rooms in which the tea was served, was very prettily decorated with daffodils and yellow ribbons. The guests were entertained with some most enjoyable music, and delightful songs by Mrs. Gower-Burns, Mrs. Kettle and Mrs. Rose. Mrs. Stead wore a handsome gown of pale grey cloth, with touches of white and silver; Miss Stead had a very becoming gown of white cloth with pale blue. (SR 12 Sept. 1906, 76)

From here, Cabot proceeds to describe the attire of all twenty-seven female guests. The re-telling of Society events preoccupies many of the regular correspondents also. In one of her letters "Verity", of Dunedin, writes of the small dinner party held at Mrs. W. H. Reynolds' residence in "Willowbank" - "the table decorations were very graceful and dainty, chrysanthemums and similar being used very effectively" - and also of the dance held by Mrs. Royce to celebrate her daughter's coming of age ("Correspondents' Letters" 5 Aug. 1903, 7).

Admittedly such descriptions contribute to the sense of the "Ladies' Page" as a "club"; they imply that everyone within the wider community is known to each other and that they all partake in these often intimate social gatherings. However, they also stand in direct contradiction to Cabot's comments elsewhere concerning the frivolousness of Society functions. Again, this is an instance of Cabot supplying what is, to all intents and purposes, obligatory information under the tradition of women's media. It is expected and desired by her readers.

Of the interests and hobbies discussed in the "Ladies' Page", music and literature receive by far the greatest attention. This is once again a reflection of traditional women's media, stemming from the middle- and upper-class belief that singing and musicianship were eminently suitable as feminine arts, and that women were peculiarly attracted to fiction. In the material Cabot presents on these subjects the main emphasis falls upon how famous female singers and writers work, and how would-be singers and writers might achieve the same heights. "How Women Writers Work" (21 Jan. 1897 7), "How to Preserve the Voice" ([by Madame Marie Roze] 3 May 1894 9), and "How to Sing: A Word of Advice from Madame Calve" (5 Aug. 1903, 5) are all examples of this. Unsurprisingly, given her own editorial position and brief forays into the world of poetic composition, Cabot is especially interested in the activities of women writers. They are often acknowledged in the "Woman's World" column, and on more than one occasion Cabot comments upon the suitability of women pursuing writing as a profession. Indubitably there is an element of self-justification in this. Cabot would be acutely aware of her minority status in a male-dominated industry; by making frequent references to the activities of successful female journalists abroad she substantiates the validity of her own role, creates a sense of female solidarity, and encourages more women to join the ranks. Patricia Okker writes that amongst nineteenth-century American women editors there was a strong feeling of community which often mirrored the relationship between a woman editor and her audience (22); this is very much the feeling conveyed by Cabot.

Given its traditional association with women, fiction is also a constant and prominent feature of the "Ladies' Page". A story appears in every issue of the sample studied, from Cabot's third "Ladies' Page" onwards, and this is additional to the substantial fiction section that exists within the *Canterbury Times* as a whole. For the most part these stories focus upon love or the relations between men and women, whether in friendship, courtship or marriage. Another topic which appears more than once in the sample is that of class relations between middle-class mistresses and lower-class domestic servants. These subjects reflect a perception in both Cabot and the fiction-writers that female readers are most interested in romance, marriage and the affairs of domestic life - all

areas relating specifically to women's "sphere". The romance theme in particular is given added weight with the introduction of a new section towards the end of Cabot's editorship which presents true love stories. Boldly titled "The Magic Power of Love", the weekly column features items such as "Quaker Love Stories" (5 Sept. 1906, 71), "Prison Love Stories" (12 Sept. 1906, 71), "Love on the Battle-Field" (19 Sept. 1906, 71) and "Love Stories of the Poor" (26 Sept. 1906, 71). Ranging from between two and three columns long and following directly after Cabot's editorial column, this section holds a prominent position in the "Page" and was evidently considered a much looked-for item. It was later replaced with the column "Romantic Stories of Famous Families" but as the reader will note, the subject matter remained largely the same.

The prominence of stories in the "Ladies' Page" is indicative of the "Page's" primary function as a source of entertainment. The *Canterbury Times* as a whole was intended for leisurely weekend reading and within that framework the "Ladies' Page" was specifically designed for women's enjoyment and pleasure, as an agreeable interlude in the daily rounds of house-keeping. As illustrated, much of the pleasure of the text emerges from the sense of female collectivity it evokes. Through the gender specificity of the "Ladies' Page" Cabot effectively communicates a feeling of female sociability and companionship. Her "sisterly editorial voice" encourages a sense of community, in spite of the disparate rural locations of many of her readers, and transmits an intimacy, familiarity and warmth.

At the same time there is an intense process of female socialisation occurring in the "Ladies' Page" that reflects closely the patterns of traditional women's media. Consciously or sub-consciously, Cabot defines for her readers what is "womanly" and "unwomanly" and establishes the parameters of normative female behaviour. As shown, she adheres closely to many of the bourgeois ideals of femininity: marriage and domesticity are given pre-eminence and are presented as inevitable goals on the immediate horizon of every young woman; within the relationship of marriage women are consistently cast in the role of service to their husbands, reinforcing such images as the "angel by the hearth"; the importance of female attractiveness is emphasised, perpetuating the sense that women must by necessity be decorative; and many of the activities

and pastimes described relate to the cultivation of traditional feminine appeal or accomplishments.

As with regard to the subjects of love and "girl-bachelors", however, there are shifts in these representations which reflect the changing social circumstances. There is also a strong suggestion that Cabot is not entirely in favour of the traditional women's fare she provides or the influence that media such as the "Ladies' Page" exert over their readers. There is evidence of attempts by Cabot to negate this influence and warnings to the reader against taking women's pages too seriously, but obviously Cabot is restricted in her selection of material by reader expectation and by what is available through syndication. To exclude items such as fashion and Society news would alienate a significant proportion of the *Canterbury Times* female clientele, thus inflating the circulation of the *Press*. It is therefore an economic imperative for Cabot to preserve elements of traditional women's media which she might otherwise abjure. As will be seen in Chapter Four, however, there was still room within this matrix to give ample attention to the Women's Movement and to address issues of a modern and progressive nature.

CHAPTER THREE: CABOT'S MODE OF ADDRESS: A HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE

While Cabot's address appears to conjure the image of a universal sisterhood, neatly splitting the projected audience of the *Canterbury Times* along the binary line of gender, the assumptions she makes about the "Ladies' Page" readers have a strong class basis. The choice of subject matter, while of a domestic nature and relating generally to women's sphere, reflects more specifically the experience and frame of reference of the white middle-class woman, thus privileging her as the addressee. This is evident throughout Cabot's discussions of marriage, fashion, Society, women's culture, education, and employment opportunities, where the horizon of expectations for middle-class women was markedly different from that of the working-class. It is evident in the very ideals of the "womanly woman" and "true" wife and mother that Cabot presents, and on rare occasions it is explicitly signified through Cabot's direct differentiation between a middle-class audience and its working-class counterpart. The women Cabot establishes as role models, whether consciously or unconsciously, are invariably of the upper or middle classes, as are the various spokeswomen she cites. And the periodicals from which she selects material are generally class journals, like the *Canterbury Times* itself, which, in spite of claiming broadly to be a "family journal", was still the ideological vehicle of middle-class proprietors.

While one of Cabot's primary concerns is drawing women's attention to the ambitions and activities of the Women's Movement, which would seem to emphasise issues of gender, uniting rather than dividing women in a shared cause, the perspective is again rooted firmly in middle-class experience. The New Woman, who will be discussed at greater length in the ensuing chapter, was, by definition, middle-class: an individual with leisure and wealth enough to actively engage in sporting activities, tertiary education, and the professional occupations to which that education led. The pioneering consciousness discernible in Cabot's writing would also seem to breach class barriers in defining New Zealand women collectively in terms of strength, resourcefulness, sense and practicality. But the absence of any

reference to the numerous impoverished women living in straitened circumstances²⁷ raises the question of whether this also entails a privileged address. This chapter will endeavour to illustrate the variety of ways in which Cabot's ostensibly universal address is more exclusively directed, not only privileging a select portion of the female audience but reproducing the hegemonic ruling class discourse that implicitly and explicitly dictates the subordination of the lower-class to the middle-class. As discussed in the previous chapter, the cultural work of Cabot and the cultural work of the "Ladies' Page" can be similarly divergent in this area also.

While there is continuing debate concerning the exact position of periodicals within the structures of social discourse, it is widely conceded that historically the press has played an instrumental role in transmitting ruling class ideologies. Lucien Goldman, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, and Antonio Gramsci all discuss the prominence of the press in reproducing and reinforcing bourgeois hegemony (Pykett 9-10). The two factors defining this are, firstly, the tendency for newspaper owners themselves to be middle-class, and secondly, the commercial incentive of appealing to ruling class interests. As James Mill illustrated in his early nineteenth-century examination of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, periodical literature depends upon "*immediate success*" and must therefore:

patronise the opinions which are now in vogue, the opinions of those who are now in power. It will obtain applause, and will receive reward, in proportion as it is successful in finding plausible reasons for the maintenance of the favourite opinions of the powerful classes. (Pykett 13)

This was at no point more significant than in the mid to late nineteenth-century when the middle classes were endeavouring to consolidate their power. As previously illustrated, there was a concern

²⁷ Margaret Tennant writes that there were many female "casualties" of colonial society, who were dependent upon the relief offered by charitable aid boards. "No male support" was the most commonly cited cause of female poverty (37). She also states that by the 1890s a strong myth had developed that New Zealand was a "land of plenty", where there was no starvation or poverty for those prepared to work.

to reproduce the English class system in New Zealand and New Zealand newspapers were specifically established in the interests of colonial development. The *Lyttelton Times* and its weekly digest are prime examples of this, and their strong affiliation to the Liberal Government meant they had a distinctive middle-class political and economic agenda.

While neither politics nor social economics is discussed in the "Ladies' Page", there is a strong emphasis upon the cultural representations of the middle-class, which constituted the feminine domain of class management. In her book, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Elizabeth Langland argues persuasively for the considerable strength exercised by middle-class women in governing class relations. Insofar as the home was central to middle-class status, functioning as a "theatre" for the staging of a family's social importance, the collective cultural "ephemera and trivia" of women's lives represented a significant political and economic discourse (9). This is reinforced by the studies of Martha Vicinus and Leonore Davidoff, Vicinus emphasising the power of "Grundyism" and the influence of middle-class women in enforcing the moral code (xiv), and Davidoff addressing the great social significance attached to a variety of female cultural practices. Conspicuous consumption, the increasingly complex rules of etiquette and dress, formal conventions of Society and house-to-house visiting, and the plethora of ritualistic domestic practices associated with the family, were all explicitly directed at concretising middle-class control and lay solely in the hands of women.

Etiquette books, house-hold manuals, novels, and women's magazines were all responsible for perpetuating these notions and practices, and the *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page" was no exception. The most immediate indicator of class orientation is in the title. "Ladies", like its counterpart, "gentlemen", was a term signifying gentility and refinement. As noted previously, it carried a mark of respectability and conservatism not inherent in the term "woman", which was evidently, by some interpretations, an insulting label. In an ongoing debate concerning terminology and politeness "Mrs. Jellaby" remarks that "a judge and jury have decided ... it is no libel to call one of the fair sex a woman, although she may claim to be a "lady" (HT 4 Jan. 1894, 6). Cabot is clearly not averse to the term "woman", using it

repeatedly and without prejudice, and making frequent recourse to its new radical and progressive application. She refers to "women inspectors" (HT 3 May 1894, 4), "women painters" (HT 31 May 1894, 8), "women doctors" (HT 14 Jan. 1897, 4), and speaks generally of what Woman" is doing or may do in the future. However the terms "lady" and "gentlewoman" (also a class marker) are equally prevalent. These appellations were not *restricted* to female members of the upper and middle class but they were directly related to middle class values of propriety and etiquette, and how a woman *should* behave. Subsequently, one had to earn these titles by acting in accordance with middle class principles.

As marriage marks the introduction of the girl into the bourgeois ideal of womanhood, it is appropriate to begin with this subject. Evincing a strong class distinction the representations of marriage in the "Ladies' Page" exclude the lower-class reader and redefine and, or, validate the values and practices of the middle-class reader. This occurs both in the descriptions of weddings that have taken place in the community and in the articles proffering advice on the state of wedlock. The lower-class reader is excluded in two ways: firstly, because her class is not represented in these portrayals; and secondly, because it is intimated that she is not the intended recipient of the information. In the regular "Weddings" and "Woman's Diary" columns, which both describe local weddings, only the marriages of the social elite are announced. They are described in detail, from the bridal party's attire to the floral arrangements, reception, guests, and gifts, and each feature is a testament to the wealth and social standing of the families concerned. The marital alliance between Mr. George Dalrymple Fisher, "third son of the Hon. James Temple Fisher", and Alice Emma, "second daughter of Mr. John Thomas Matson of Springfield, is a case in point (WD 10 May 1894, 9). Cabot writes that the church was "tastefully decorated" with "white chrysanthemums and toi-toi, while scarlet holly, appropriately intermingled, gave a very bright effect"; she describes the bride, who was clothed in cream satin and bedecked with orange blossom, and wore not only a long lace veil but also a train bordered with ostrich feathers; the choir at the ceremony was composed of members of the Christchurch Liederkrauzchen; the church bells that pealed at the bride's emergence from the chapel were a gift from her father; and among the many

notable guests at the wedding breakfast, the Hon. J. T. Peacock is applauded for having made a particularly *à propos* speech. In this instance Cabot reneges on describing the presents, other than to say that they were "so numerous that much space would be required to enumerate them all" and that they were "as remarkable for their costliness as for their utility, there being a large number of cheques included in the list"²⁸.

While there is no reason why lower-class readers should not be interested in reading of these weddings, the specific identification of guests suggests that the reader is expected to have an intimate knowledge of that social milieu. The practice of listing guests at Society weddings (instituted in middle-class women's media long before Cabot's appearance) is a means of indicating who is currently "in vogue", who is mixing with whom, and whose favour one should be courting. The lower-class reader is thus peripheralised, being excluded from both the event itself and from the community of readers to whom Cabot primarily addresses her information. Because their weddings are not announced (not even in the simplest or most rudimentary form), the lower-classes are precluded from sharing this opportunity to celebrate their unions publically, through a medium purportedly designed to represent the whole community. Their activities are thus implicitly dismissed as being of no social importance. Why lower-class weddings are excluded is not clear; the invitation to announce one's wedding was apparently open to all. Two solutions present themselves: either Cabot deliberately left out material that was not in keeping with the overall tone of the "Page", or lower-class families deliberately chose not to use the "Ladies' Page" to announce their nuptials, perceiving it as a forum solely for the elite.

The details described for each wedding represent Langland's cultural "ephemera and trivia" and assume great social importance, insofar as they constitute the yard-stick by which the middle-class reader may judge the success or otherwise of circumstances in her own life. When Cabot prints such details she again becomes complicit in fashion setting and the establishment of social expectations, while

²⁸ At another instance where Cabot does describe the gifts, they are listed as being a silver bon-bon casket, a silver belt, and a diamond ring - bestowed by the Earl of Ranfurly, Countess of Ranfurly, and Dunedin Jockey Club respectively ("Fashionable Dunedin Wedding" 13 June 1900, 8).

perpetuating the notion that middle-class values and practices are the most socially valid. Cabot's personal view on this was illustrated in Chapter Two, in her complaint concerning women's "unhealthy emulation" of the wedding gowns described in ladies' columns. Clearly she is averse to publishing material that influences women to be frivolous and spend beyond their means, but this is yet another area where she is compelled to follow tradition. The "Weddings" column is requisite ladies' page material.

As has been shown in the article "Are Engagements Tests of Love" ([*Pearson's Weekly*] 14 Jan. 1897, 6) the intended recipients of matrimonial advice in the "Ladies' Page" are also often middle-class. The writer is observing "the problems that affect the middle classes mostly", which result from the perilous aim of the "modern middle class girl" to "secure the best match possible amongst her friends". In addition to this direct address, the manner in which matrimony is described by the writer excludes lower-class women in being outside their personal realms of possibility. Couples are described as marrying for "position, wealth, or other social reasons" and it is stated that if a girl "can satisfy Mammon that her future husband is a follower of Croesus, all is well; the world will ask no more questions". While financial security may have been a consideration in lower-class alliances, wealth and social importance were not qualities to be found in the average "eligible" lower-class bachelor. Inter-class marriages did occur but in the majority of cases men and women were socially discouraged from marrying above or below their station.

The article "Men Girls Elope With" ([*English Paper*] 14 Jan. 1897, 4-5) is an example of that social discouragement in action, the writer condemning inter-class matches as foolish and ill-fated. In this portrayal of various elopements, the lower-class suitor is presented as a figure of fun and his middle-class fiancée as flighty and senseless. While it is a humorous account, both lower-class men and women are ultimately degraded when the writer assumes a more serious tone to speak of the "misery and wretchedness" suffered by the middle-class girl in her choice of spouse. Lower-class readers might justifiably be insulted by such comments. Clearly they are not the intended audience; the passage is designed as both entertainment and warning for their social superiors.

Cabot's own comments on love and marriage (aside from those in the "Weddings" column) are more indiscriminate and do not necessarily imply a specific class orientation. When she writes of the importance of love and of the duties of wife and mother it is with a more general application; love is a necessity in all marriages, whether couples are rich or poor, and while there may be a difference in degree or elaboration, all women's domestic duties are essentially the same. As illustrated in relation to the "Household Hints" column, there is more of a mixed class sensitivity in much of Cabot's household advice and an emphasis upon the importance of economising. Articles such as "A Home-Made Wardrobe: For a Girl's Room" ([*Woman*] 20 June 1900, 9) and "A Shoe-Case for the Bedroom" (27 June 1900, 7) take account of the possible straitened circumstances of some sectors of the audience and provide them with the means for creating as much attractiveness and neatness in their homes as any other women.

There is a class distinction cast, however, by the number of articles which appear on the subject of the "Servant Problem". The frequency with which they occur suggests that Cabot believes the topic to be a major preoccupation for her audience. This again alienates the lower-class reader, firstly, because only middle-and upper-class homes could afford to employ servants;²⁹ and secondly, because lower-class women were in fact the source of the "problem" in refusing to become domestic servants. A dearth of reliable serving women was not of concern to lower-class women but an indication of their own dissatisfaction with an unpleasant and burdensome occupation. Articles such as "Domestic Evolution" ([*St. James's Budget*] 21 Jan. 1897, 6), "The Servant Problem" (20 June 1900, 7), and "Training Domestic Servants" (2 October 1907, 75), are all written from a middle-class perspective, generally hinting at the inconvenience for women in maintaining the home in proper order without the assistance of an efficient, trustworthy serving staff. Cabot's approach is pragmatic and encouraging towards domestic servants insofar as she vehemently recommends an elevation of status for this employment and advocates a move towards certification. Yet the inclusion of these articles reinforces the class division and the implicit assumption that the middle-class woman's role in the home is managerial, while

²⁹ Langland writes that by definition a household became middle-class in its employment of at least one servant (8).

subordination marks that of the working-class girl. While it is well-intentioned, Cabot's criticism of gentlewomen's prejudices against domestic workers can also only serve to accentuate the latter's sense of inferiority.

A more thorough representation of the relationship between mistress and servant is given in the fiction section of the "Ladies' Page" in stories such as "A Self-Respecting Servant" ([by Grant Allen] 24 May 1894, 8) and "When Emmeline Came: A Familiar Kitchen Incident in the Life of a Happy Family" ([*Ladies Home Journal*] 2 October 1907, 73). Both provide brief vignettes of the domestic situation in a middle-class home and are written from the perspective of a middle-class protagonist. "A Self-Respecting Servant" presents an exemplary parlour-maid, in the figure of Martha, whose fastidious appearance and attention to duty makes her an asset to the home:

She was a model parlour-maid Her back hair alone was worth all the money. It was a guarantee of her respectability, plaited and coiled with immaculate neatness. There were so many plaits and so many coils that one thought it must take her half her time to arrange it. Yet she was always down as the clock struck six, and a speck on her silver would have driven her to suicide.

Martha symbolically functions as an extension of the status of the household, her unquestioning subservience, impeccable neatness, and "ever-imperturbable 'Yes, ma'am; thank you, ma'am'", signifying a faultless moral character. Martha herself regards this as part of the natural order, deriving her own sense of pride and self-respect from the perfection with which she fulfils her role in the social hierarchy:

"I've always been a self-respecting servant. I've always lived in the very best families, with perfect ladies I've always tried to keep myself up in the world; and the real fact is ma'am, I couldn't demean myself by

stopping in a place where the lady of the house waits
on the servants. I haven't been accustomed to it.

"When Emmeline Came: A Familiar Kitchen Incident in the Life of a Happy Family" describes the turmoil engendered by the lack of reliable waiting staff in a middle-class American household. Having lost their previous staff to the factories, the family is forced to employ "charwomen", or day servants. These women are unattractively and uniformly characterised as being unreliable, lazy, and given to consuming large quantities of tea and alcohol. The stress of coping with these "intoxicated people" is too much for the delicate sensibilities of the mother, who has a nervous breakdown and is sent to a sanatorium. The entire episode is referred to as a period of "domestic anarchy" and is presented as a grave threat to the stability of both family and home environment. In spite of the fact that there are only two adults and two children in the family, it is taken for granted by the narrator that they should not be expected to rely upon their own resources and that the reader will sympathise with their painful plight. Fortunately, they are rescued by Emmeline, who also epitomises the exemplary parlour-maid, and through her industrious efforts the household is restored to a state of happy normality.

In both scenarios the lower-class domestic servant is placed within a narrow and paradoxical confine: if they had not performed to the standard expected of them, Martha and Emmeline would have been relegated to the deplorable category of the charwomen; but when they execute their duties exceptionally well, they are perceived as inhuman, a species apart. Martha's automaton-like precision and fastidious observance of correct mistress-servant decorum causes her to be labelled "too perfect, too irreproachable ever to be human": "she wasn't a woman; she was an ideal parlour-maid". This is a telling statement that constructs the lower-class woman as ideological "other" and outside the "womanly" ideal; it "naturalises" class difference, transferring it from a difference in degree of wealth to a difference in kind.

Presumably, the purpose of these stories is to create a sense of empathy amongst middle-class women concerning the trials of running a household; and to make entertainment of a situation which

may have otherwise appeared quite serious. Yet for the lower-class reader the emphasis and importance placed upon domestic service renders them as being without agency or meaning in society, other than as the necessary adjunct to the middle class household. They must stand and serve in order that their more privileged "sisters" may fulfil their "womanly" role. This is succinctly illustrated in the second story where the mother, having recovered her wits and the sanctity of her household through Emmeline's aid, is able to attend lectures on "The Ethics of Personal Life" - an eminently suitable pastime for a moral and virtuous middle-class wife. Both stories make generic assumptions about servants. To what extent they are a reflection of reality is indiscernible, but their publication reinforces the class distinction of middle-class control and lower-class subordination. Yet again these segments are presented for the entertainment of the middle-class, while offering only degradation for their lower-class counterparts. Whether Cabot is consciously aware of this is not indicated, but she is certainly not as dismissive of domestic servants as the writers of these stories. Her suggestion of "gentlewomen servants" also implies that she does not see lower-class women as another species or as deserving of disdain.

It is important to note that although Cabot's domestic advice is of a mixed class nature, the values and duties she posits in relation to the household all originate from middle-class ideology. Regardless of the particulars, the stress laid upon the wife's role in caring for husband and home connects strongly with the ideal of the "angel by the hearth". There is no reason for constantly delineating this relationship between wife and husband, unless it is to inculcate a set model of behaviour; the frequency with which Cabot refers elsewhere to the importance of self-improvement suggests that this is her agenda. So although the lower-class reader is not, in this instance, excluded from Cabot's address, she still experiences the imposition of middle-class rules concerning how she should conduct her home life. These rules are an imposition upon the middle-class reader also but she at least plays an integral part in creating them. There was a reciprocal process operating in the maintenance of nineteenth-century middle-class hegemony, for as Langland states, "middle-class women were produced by domestic discourses even as they reproduced them to consolidate middle-class control" (11). The "Ladies' Page" presents a

"domestic discourse" but Cabot herself has been "produced" by the domestic discourses of other women's media, of her own family background, and of the community in which she grew up. And while she is "producing" her readers, they have been involved in perpetuating in their own communities the notions of which Cabot writes.

Although lower-class women may succeed in meeting the "required" duties of house-keepers, there are many other factors associated with "womanliness" in the "Ladies' Page" of which they could not help but fall short. One such factor is that of playing hostess. While the ability to entertain is not explicitly identified as a "womanly" quality, the social obligations of women hold such prominence in the "Ladies' Page" that successful hospitality is cast as a *sine qua non* of women's culture. As is illustrated in a variety of instances, such as in the fiction section,³⁰ the "Social Round" column and articles on etiquette, house-to-house calling was an indispensable element of maintaining a family's social status; it was a daily occupation amongst the middle-class and involved a number of ritualistic practices which were entrenched in middle-class codes of etiquette and morality. Cabot provides assistance in this direction by suggesting novel forms of entertainment, the type of food to serve, and the appropriate flower arrangements for various occasions, according to meal-time and season. In her editorial for 25 September 1907, for example, she gives instructions for hosting a bridal "violet tea", the violet being "flower of the moment" (HT 71). She describes an elaborate table-centre, composed of a broad white satin ribbon embroidered with violets, and suggests having violets massed in low silver bowls, crystallised violets mingled with the sweets, and a violet cake (recipe provided), bedecked with a violet satin ribbon. For entertainment, Cabot says she is sure the able hostess will readily think of numerous competitions, but does recommend the framing of sentences of a given number of words commencing with the letter "V".

³⁰ See "When Emmeline Came: A Familiar Kitchen Incident in the Life of a Happy Family" ([*Ladies' Home Journal*] 2 Oct. 1907, 73), where the writer states: "Hospitality had been the law of life and the rule of the house for us all and our English fathers before us". While Emmeline restores the household to its proper state of domestic perfection, her displeasure at serving the guests who daily stream through the family's front door proves to be their social undoing.

In the later stages of her editorship, Cabot actually begins to report on who is visiting who, the toing and froing of individuals from one place to another constituting a regular ingredient of the "Social Round" column and reading like an itinerary of the social elite. Concluding the discussion of one week's social events, Cabot writes:

Miss Phyllis Boyle is staying in Wellington. Mr. and Mrs. Bethell (Pahau Pastures) were in town last week. Mrs. M. Jamieson has returned to Timaru. Mr. and Mrs. E. V. Palmer returned to Gisbourne last Thursday. Colonel and Mrs. Chaffey have been staying with Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Campbell at "Ilam" Miss Burns is paying a round of visits in South Canterbury. (25 Sept. 1907, 76)

As will be noted, these rituals of visiting are not confined to the Canterbury area but stretch the length and breadth of the country.³¹ Letters from the regular correspondents reinforce the importance of these practices also by describing the recent social gatherings that have taken place in their own areas. In the Dunedin letter of 10 May 1894 ("Correspondents' Letters" 9) "Madge" writes that "on Wednesday Mrs. James Allen had a large afternoon tea, when the now customary introduction of music was found very enjoyable" and "another afternoon tea was given on Thursday by Mrs. Sargood".

The presentation of such information has already been described in this thesis as contributing to the sense of a "club", but in fact this is an area where the "club" is more exclusively composed and does not generate the feeling of engaging women everywhere. Lower-class women did not have the leisure or means to excel as hostesses in the manner Cabot describes; nor did they have time to make the daily round of social visits associated with "keeping up appearances". Moreover, as is illustrated by the letter and "Social Round" column, this sociability was restricted to a select circle of acquaintanceship amongst the fashionable set; if it were not so, neither Cabot nor the

³¹ Because New Zealand was still mostly rural and many women were living in isolation, the customary social visitations were more likely to be further afield and of a prolonged nature.

letter-writer would take the time to personally identify every visitor or afternoon-tea holder.

The same is true of the other social events described in the "Social Round" and "Woman's Diary" columns. Both columns are almost exclusively concerned with the activities of the social elite (which again implicitly signals the activities of other women as being unimportant) and at each function recounted - whether a ball, play, opera, operatic carnival, picnic or fête - recognition is given to those of wealth and social standing. As with the description of weddings, this was a common practice of Society magazines, having a three-fold purpose: it offers acknowledgement to the socially successful; provides direction for readers as to who is currently part of the "in crowd"; and the accompanying descriptions of their attire help to establish a model for emulation. An example of this may be found in Cabot's listing of the guests present at the High School Old Boys' Football Club annual dance:

Among those present were Mrs. Beaven-Brown, wearing black silk; Mrs. Lawrence, handsome black satin gown; Mrs. Appleby, wearing black crêpe de Chine and passementerie trimming; Mrs. Khon, white glaze covered with embroidered black chiffon; Mrs. Staveley, black satin; Mrs. Fairhurst, pale blue silk trimmed with black velvet. (SR 25 Sept. 1907, 76)

Snippets such as these may also be seen as an example of "community boasting", an assertion that New Zealand women are as civilised, sophisticated and fashionable as their European counterparts; although, as has already been noted, Cabot includes such material out of a sense of obligation rather than from personal approbation.

Along with reporting Society activities, Cabot provides strict guidelines for "proper" social behaviour. Many of her editorial comments are concerned with the inculcation of good manners and the importance of courtesy, but there are also full-length articles such as "Reform of Manner" (17 May 1894, 9), "Don'ts for the Girls of the Present Day" (28 Jan. 1897, 8), "The Question of Hats Off" (20 June 1900, 8), "Teach Your Daughters" (26 Sept. 1906, 7) and "Mistakes Made

in *Everyday Etiquette: Manners for the Million*" (2 Oct. 1907, 74). As with the domestic advice, this body of information reflects the imposition of middle-class standards and values upon the rest of society. Its placement in the "Ladies' Page" is also in keeping with the bourgeois ideology, implying as it does that women bear responsibility for the transmission of social values.

The rules for etiquette encompass a broad range of areas, from personal habits to the formal presentation of calling cards and the correct attire for mourning. In one editorial Cabot sternly warns women against the habit of excessive volubility:

To a woman who likes to talk, and most women do, it is not easy to realise that others have not their own supreme admiration for the sound of their own voice, the account of her happenings and tastes. She must have the art of story-telling, and must then tell only the best stories, who is destined to "Hold forth" in a *tête-à-tête* or a larger assemblage. To her who would be popular the motto should always be "Listen, listen, listen!" (HT 24 May 1894, 8)

"Mistakes Made in Everyday Etiquette" deals with the more complex and ritualistic elements of etiquette, such as the instances in which a gentleman should raise his hat to a lady, when he should shake hands with a lady, whether it is ill-mannered to proffer a gloved hand, and how to tell a man's character by the quality of his visiting card -

If it is elaborately printed, the legibility being almost hidden by embellishments and flourishes, you may be quite sure that his love of display considerably outruns his knowledge of what is correct and in good taste. (2 Oct. 1907, 74)³²

³² Cynthia White writes that in higher class English periodicals the procedure for card-leaving caused the greatest number of enquiries from Society women. It was not only the most complicated social procedure but also the most imperative, as it indicated whom one wished to number amongst one's acquaintances (79).

There is also highly specific information concerning the correct period of mourning for each relative:

Widows, strictly speaking, should wear mourning for two years, although after eight or nine months half-mourning may be adopted. The same has been fixed for widowers, although they usually enter society much sooner than do widows. A parent who loses a son or daughter is expected to wear black for twelve months, the period being the same for a child who loses a parent. For a brother or sister, the longest period of mourning is six months; for a grandparent, nine months; for an uncle or aunt, three months; and the same for a nephew or niece. (74)

The examples of the gentleman's calling card and the "fashion" in appropriate mourning procedure illustrate the importance of middle-class manners as an indicator of virtue and moral character. Regardless of the fact that manners apparently change according to trend ("fashion has vetoed the sending of memorial cards" ["Mistakes Made in Everyday Etiquette" 2 Oct. 1907, 74]), they are the social sign by which society measures an individual's worth. Cabot herself makes the connection between manners and morals explicit when she quotes Horace Mann: "Manners easily and rapidly develop into morals", and Ralph Waldo Emerson: "They are the happy ways of doing things, each once a stroke of genius or of love; now repeated and hardened into usage" (HT 3 May 1894, 7). Good manners are the mark of virtue in the "true woman".

The manners described in the "Ladies' Page", however, are the effects of class refinement and are as much an indicator of social status as of virtue; they are a significant factor in class management and serve to reinforce the social hegemony of the bourgeois. The lower-class reader is therefore implicitly excluded from the address of this material also. More importantly, she is again reminded that she has no hope of attaining the ideal of "true" womanhood, as it is associated so thoroughly with this elaborate code of manners.

Fashion is another area of bourgeois sign manipulation, the elements of feminine attire being invested with a specific social significance. In her discussion of the "rituals" of dress, Leonore Davidoff states:

the strict demarcation by age as well as status of women and girls in the nineteenth century is indicated by the variety and complexity of their clothes Every cap, bow, streamer, ruffle, fringe, bustle, glove or other elaboration symbolised some status category for the female wearer. (93)

In her regular fashion columns Cabot does not enter into details concerning demarcations of age and status, but she does delineate every intricacy associated with the modes of the moment, which alter from week to week. The purchase of any or all of the items described would necessitate a remarkably capacious purse. Even the tiniest button is a fashion accessory and opportunity for display:

Buttons are lovelier than ever. Amongst the small ones the moonstones and opals in invisible settings are most artistic; tiny enamelled buttons, and turquoise or coral in a fine steel setting are very effective. (FF 6 June 1900, 7)

The fabrics listed in the columns are invariably costly - voile, crêpe de Chine, toile de soie, lace velvet, and silk - and often elaborately embroidered or festooned; and the dress styles presented are primarily designed for Society functions, or, at the very least, for the woman who must daily transform into evening wear suited to the formality of the middle-class drawing-room. With regard to hair, Cabot frequently describes coiffures which would require the attendance of a stylist, while diamonds and other precious gems figure prominently amidst the items of jewellery. The very language of the fashion column is suffused with a decadence and sumptuousness: much of the terminology is French, which is automatically associated with the

aristocracy and the “accomplishments” of well-bred young ladies; and Parisian tailors are regally dubbed “princes” of fashion (FF 7 Jan. 1897, 5).

Aside from the specific styles, much of the content of the “Ladies’ Page” fashion column, and the manner in which it is presented, parallels the way in which fashion is show-cased in women’s magazines today. It is a reflection of the on-going fetishistic delight of women of all ages and all eras in the adornment of the female body, and it plays strongly upon feminine desire. Women desire to be as appealing as possible, because of discourses such as Cabot’s which perpetually emphasise the necessity of women’s pleasantness and attractiveness. The fashion industry, and the media which uphold it, show women how this may be achieved, but the standards they use are those of the moneyed elite. While there is an element of fantasy in the fashion column even for the middle-class reader (she cannot possibly hope to attain all that is presented in it), she has the means to satisfy at least some of her desire. For the lower-class reader, the fashion column represents all desire and no attainment; reading it is an oppressive pleasure.

The same is true of other areas governed by middle-class fashion, such as interior decorating or household pets. “A Room in Kharki (sic)” ([*The Lady*] 27 June 1900, 9) and “Fashions in Pet Dogs” (25 Sept. 1907, 76) both presuppose a moneyed audience, wealthy enough and sufficiently fashion conscious to act upon whim rather than need. Decorating one’s room in khaki as a token of love and support for an absent soldier is an extravagant gesture, necessitating a considerable disposable income (especially given the absence of the chief provider) and much leisure time. To achieve the desired effect, the writer suggests using damasks, furnishing velours, Egyptian silk (in the shades of soft pink, deep cream, mushroom and khaki) and a frieze of anaglypta. The project is clearly intended to involve full-scale alteration, although “Eunice” emphasises that it is only a modest plan:

I should like it to be a very small room, one which, in the ordinary way, would be used as a dressing room, opening off a bed-room [for] I only want it to contain three or four comfortable chairs, a writing-bureau, a

revolving book-case, and a little table for afternoon tea.
(27 June 1900, 9)

Needless to say, "Eunice's" conception of "ordinary" is comparatively elevated. Perhaps even more surprising is her expectation that this decorating might easily be reversed once the soldier has returned. From Cabot's emphasis upon economical ways of decorating, it may be deduced that she would not share "Eunice's" enthusiasm for such a project. It is also evident that Cabot was not in favour of a preoccupation with fashion, so these are both areas in which the class address is again dictated by the women's media tradition and by the availability of material through syndication.

Another area in the "Ladies' Page" in which a class orientation is evident is in the presentation of women's hobbies, and here Cabot's own attitude is clearly middle-class in origin. While needlework and sewing were pastimes engaged in by most women, reading, writing, painting, and music were more closely associated with the upper- and middle-classes. As previously stated, Cabot's emphasis upon women's pursuits in these fields is borrowed from traditional middle-class women's media, which presumed a highly educated, literate, and leisured readership. In the past, few lower-class women would have had the time, money, or learning to indulge in such hobbies. As with fashion and manners, this meant that such practices became class indicators and effects of refinement. With regard to books Patricia Okker writes that the popular Victorian image of the female reader was as a woman of gentility (113). Books functioned as markers of one's economic status, signifying one's capacity to consume commodities.

In the context of late nineteenth-century New Zealand, the middle- and upper-class monopoly on the arts was not as strong. The 1877 Education Act ensured that people of all classes would have the ability to read, and access to books was provided through public libraries. There was also a much wider emphasis placed upon music in the colony, with people of all classes engaging in piano-playing.

Writing of the prominence of the piano in New Zealand,³³ R.D. Arnold quotes Edward Wakefield as stating:

A remarkable and suggestive feature in the furnishing of houses in this country is the great number of pianos or harmoniums. There is probably no country in the world where a musical instrument worth from £10 to £40 is so common an accessory of the home, even among the poorer class. (5)³⁴

While writing generally of the high capability of the colonial girl, Cabot herself writes:

She is versatile to a degree, also, and if she needs a shelf here or a table there, the chances are that she will set to work with hammer and saw and turn out what she requires Then she will sit down to her piano and play Mendelssohn in a way that stirs you to the depths. (HT 19 Sept. 1906, 71)

The Wakefield quote, at least, illustrates that there was a greater degree of social mobility in New Zealand than in England, and that poorer families had more opportunity for cultivating middle-class accomplishments in their daughters. But this breach of class barriers did not undermine the importance of music, literature and art as pursuits of class refinement. Within the "Ladies' Page" they represent

³³ Calculating the statistics on piano importation, Arnold surmises that by 1901 there were at least 43,000 pianos in the country. It should be noted that the statistics only began in 1877, so there is scope for a considerably larger figure than even this. The 1901 census results also show that there were a significant number of music teachers dispersed throughout New Zealand: of the 1,400 registered, 1000 claimed to be "in business on their own account"; in other words, providing private tuition (6).

³⁴ Also quoted is Arthur Clayden, an Englishman who lived in New Zealand for several years and who wrote the following in the 1880s:

The piano or organ is heard in every home. The English lord who took the farmers to task for allowing their daughters to play pianos would be appalled here. He would find a piano in his coachman's home, and his stable-boy's sister would be heard playing opera music by the hour (5).

high culture, and it is strongly conveyed that the exposure of a girl to such cultural sophistication will have morally uplifting consequences. It is also communicated that the beauty of art, of any shape or form, is somehow transferred to the mind and physical bearing of the individual, whether a participant or observer. "It should be the object of every earnest woman to seek to educate her sense of the beautiful", writes Cabot; "one hour a day, or even half an hour, passed in reading good authors, or, if possible, in hearing good music or seeing beautiful pictures, will have a wonderfully refining effect" (WW 10 May 1894, 10). It is with similar enthusiasm that she greets the increasing popularity of the harp, which, she declares, promises to be "the instrument *par excellence* among musical gentlewomen" (HT 7 Jan. 1897, 4). It is welcomed not only because of the "golden opportunities" it affords those possessed of "pretty arms", but because of "the stately courtesy and fine manners, whose aroma seems to cling to it". As with the subjects of fashion, etiquette, domesticity, sport and health, the qualities of beauty, morality, virtue, and middle-class style are all mingled into one.

Cabot's emphasis upon culture is comparable to that of Ruskin in *Sesame and Lilies*, where he assumes that the young men and women in his audience who "will be called to occupy responsible positions in the world" will "have leisure, in preparation for these, to play tennis, or to read Plato"; and therefore that they "have Plato to read if they choose, with lawns on which they may run, and woods in which they may muse" (x). Ruskin is clearly speaking of the privileged classes, and it is to them that he addresses the entirety of *Sesame and Lilies*:

it must be premised that the book is chiefly written for young people belonging to the upper or undistressed middle, classes; who may be supposed to have choice of the objects and command of the industries of their life.
(ix-x)

Cabot apparently shares Ruskin's view of culture as the necessary ingredient in self-development, and she explicitly uses *Sesame and Lilies* as a model in discussing women's wider social role. Describing

Ruskin as "the greatest of women's friends in a truly philanthropic age" (HT 10 Dec. 1896, 5), she declares that "every woman who values her self-development as one of the most sacred duties she owes to herself should read a few lines of [*Sesame and Lilies*] every day" (HT 6 Sept. 1894, 6). This is an important element of Cabot's approach to the Women's Movement and to her overall view of the "womanly" ideal, and it most clearly shows the lower-class reader being peripheralised in her address. Ruskin posits a natural order which only functions harmoniously on the basis of lower-class subordination:

the second lecture ... "Queens' Gardens", takes for granted the persistency of Queenship, and therefore of Kingship, and therefore of Courtliness or Courtesy, and therefore of Uncourtliness or Rusticity. It assumes, with the idea of higher and lower rank, those of serene authority and happy submission: of Riches and Poverty without dispute for their rights, and of Virtue and Vice without confusion of their natures. (ix)

The notion of "Queenship" was of particular prominence in Victorian domestic discourse, relating, as it did, to the reign of Queen Victoria. Ruskin and Coventry Patmore³⁵ both used the metaphor of Queen for middle-class women in their writing, and it was further popularised in management manuals and novels (Langland 62). An important element of the bourgeois domestic ideology, the term "Queen" helped describe the dual role of "passive domestic angel" and rigorous household manager. The analogy arose from the fact that Victoria deliberately modelled herself upon the ideal middle-class housewife in order to conceal her own "unwomanly" public pre-eminence. She emphasised her dependence and deference in relation to her husband, Albert, and downplayed her suitability and aptitude for the role of monarch. She also exploited many popular domestic images of femininity (Langland 63).

As well as contributing to a conservative discourse, however, Victoria was equally useful as an embodiment of the new female type. The fact that she held the highest public office in England expanded

³⁵ Author of the homiletic verse narrative "The Angel in the House".

the perceived capabilities of women in the public realm; and it illustrated that women's moral guardianship within the home could effectively (and respectably) be extended to a nation, with private domestic values remaining intact. As will be shown more fully in the ensuing chapter, this was the prevailing tone of Cabot's feminism. Her great respect for Victoria as a monarch and as a "womanly" woman is frequently evinced throughout the "Ladies' Page"; she is presented as the ultimate role-model, the perfect blend of female pro-activeness and middle-class decorum. And she is not the only monarchic figure to be recommended thus. In her first issue of the "Ladies' Page", Cabot praises the Empress of Japan for her feminine contributions to Japanese society through her charity work for children. Declaring her to be "that sweetest of all sweet creatures, a womanly woman", Cabot writes that she has

upon many occasions openly evinced her deep interest in the wee ones of Japan, giving freely to all institutions that exist to benefit them in any way, even practising all sorts of little economies that she may be able to swell her contributions to certain charities that most interest her. (WW 3 May 1894, 8)

Moved by maternal instinct, self-sacrificing, and charitable to the poor, the Empress epitomises the bourgeois feminine ideal. The Zulu princess, Jejes, is similarly lauded for her missionary work amongst the Zulu people; While she is not explicitly identified as a "womanly woman", she is extolled as a "remarkable woman", with "great natural ability and force of character" (WW 3 May 1894, 8). Like Victoria, both of these women provide examples of the domestic ideology functioning perfectly outside the private sphere. One of the chief arguments of the Women's Movement was that if women were permitted agency beyond the home, they might then bring their natural nurturing capacities to the aid of society's ills. Charity, philanthropy, and service to the vulnerable, poor and mistreated were key factors of this (Cabot makes frequent reference to the good that will be achieved by women doctors, lawyers and inspectors in this

direction), and were therefore further defining elements of the "womanly" woman.

This is perhaps the most exclusionary factor of all for the lower-class woman. Far from having the means of benefactors, lower-class women are the perceived recipients of the "womanly" woman's charity; they are the downtrodden, upon whom the middle-class lady may practise her "womanly" virtue. An example of this may be seen in Cabot's first editorial, where she discusses the treatment of shop-assistants. "Someone was saying the other day that shop-women are not so polite to their lady customers as they are to men customers", she writes, going on to suggest:

There is some truth in this, but I think the reason is that men are more considerate of the shop-woman's feelings than some ladies may be. Men treat them with more politeness, and in their turn get their wants well-attended to. *We* often treat our much-tried sisters across the counter either with chilling hauteur and insolent brevity, or with absolute rudeness. (HT 3 May 1894, 9)

The passage then develops into a lesson in etiquette and good manners, but in this brief instant is the revelation that Cabot does not expect any of her readers to be of the status of a shop-assistant. She does, however, expect them to be in a position to be charitable and understanding towards women forced "to work for their daily bread" (HT 3 May 1894, 9). It is one of the rare occasions upon which Cabot lapses from her universalising "we" to an explicit differentiation between an "us" and "them".

Another example, which reflects directly upon women's new educational power, is in Cabot's description of the "educational excursions for women of the higher classes" in New York:

The girls will be taken to factories, prisons, philanthropic agencies, public institutions, and so forth, and be lectured to on their tour by competent

professors acquainted with the working of the various places visited. (WW 5 Aug. 1903, 9)

Such information again shows that Cabot expects her readers to be of a middle-class vantage point, and reinforces her service-oriented evaluation of the Women's Movement.

The "New Woman", with all her verve, vigour and liberty, was patently middle-class. She was the woman with leisure and wealth enough to pursue sporting activities and to attend university if she chose. She had the financial freedom and independence to travel widely, attending such international events as the Paris Exhibition that Cabot describes; and she had the social confidence to become actively engaged in women's clubs and organisations. The Women's Movement as a whole was by definition middle-class: its main agitators were of this social group (Bunkle 54), and they were the primary benefactors of the Movement's successes. While new legal and political rights were universally enjoyed by women, the opportunities of tertiary education and professional employment were more restricted; they may have theoretically been open to all women, but in reality were accessible only to those whose families were capable of sustaining them through their studies. Christchurch Girls' High School, which was specifically designed to train young women up to tertiary level, was a middle-class high school; a working-class equivalent was not available until 1904 with the establishment of West Christchurch District High School (FUW, Canterbury Branch 88).

It is inevitable, therefore, that when Cabot speaks of women's advancement in the world, she is focusing upon middle-class figures: she applauds the achievements of female university students, enthuses at length about the women who have successfully gained professional status (doctors, lawyers and writers receive the greatest attention), and heaps praise upon the middle-class feminist leaders. She is also apt to quote higher class spokes-people and magazines concerning feminist issues. In her second editorial, for example, she publishes the opinions of Lady Henry and Lady Harberton, who both agree that women should receive honours for services to humanity (HT 10 May 1894, 8).

Even with women's rights, therefore, which would appear to be a gender issue rather than a class issue, the lower-class reader is alienated or cast as spectator rather than active participant. Throughout the "Ladies' Page" she is prevented from fully engaging in the sense of communal womanhood Cabot establishes. She is not a participant in the majority of social events described in the "Page", nor is she an acquaintance of the social milieu that is constantly identified. As illustrated by the example of Christchurch Girls' High School, she is often not part of the collective ownership Cabot communicates with her "sisterly editorial voice". Much of the content of the "Ladies' Page" is above and beyond the realms of her personal experience, and more often than not, she is excluded as the potential addressee.

Of more fundamental importance is the lower-class reader's exclusion from the "womanly" ideal. From the very title of the "Ladies' Page" to the content on Society, fashion, etiquette, and domesticity, Cabot flatters the values and standards of the middle-class, reinforcing their social hegemony and dictating subservience to their cultural practices. In relation to what is "womanly" and what marks the "true woman", middle-class opinions form the benchmark, and the lower-class woman falls painfully short: she does not possess the class refinement synonymous with virtue; she is not the great benefactress and philanthropist; and her most important function in society is to serve those who do fulfil the "womanly" ideal, in order that they may do it more perfectly. Paradoxically, in terms of ethnic identity, figures such as the Empress of Japan and Princess Jejes would typically represent the ideological "other", and yet in the context of the "Ladies' Page" they share the privileged identity of the higher-class English woman. It is lower-class women who are "othered" and excluded from the pinnacle of their gender identification.

There is no evidence to suggest that Cabot is being deliberately exclusive; on the contrary, she appears genuinely sympathetic to the plight of the serving girl and is obviously intolerant of conscious class snobbery of any kind. She is, however, naturally confined to the perspective of her own class, as well as being governed by the *Canterbury Times'* imperative of maintaining a middle-class respectability and by the traditions of middle-class women's media. It is also important to note that many of the articles or works of fiction that display a strong class distinction are syndicated from English and

American sources. Combined with Cabot's imitation of English class periodicals, these emphasise a degree of differentiation that was not necessarily present in New Zealand. New Zealand was less constricted by class stratification and convention than England, as illustrated by the prevalence of the piano, and in this context of greater social mobility the "Ladies' Page" would have been a useful repository of information for those wishing to acquire class refinement. Regardless of this factor, however, the "Ladies' Page" still reflects the imposition of middle-class standards upon the rest of society. In the "gendered space" of the "Ladies' Page" all that is "womanly", feminine, or female is inextricably bound with middle-class values; and if one is to apply Shevelow's theory of an "over-determination" (5) of one female type, one finds that it is the ideal of the bourgeois housewife.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE WOMEN' S MOVEMENT

In spite of her adherence to the formulae of traditional women's magazines, and to a discourse both conservative and patriarchal in its bourgeois origins, Cabot's belief in the Women's Movement and ongoing support for its causes are irrefutable. For the duration of her journalistic career, Cabot evinced a strong dedication to advancing the progression of the Movement (on a national level at least), and although her contributions may appear small in comparison with those of more strident agitators for women's rights, her steady commitment to the ideals of the suffragists constituted a highly important ideological function. Her position with the *Canterbury Times* made it possible for her to address a significant proportion of Canterbury's female population (and a potentially significant number of New Zealand women in general). This meant she could reach both those women already in support of feminist issues and those more resistant to new models of femininity. In this capacity, her combined approach of conservatism and mild radicalism is ideal. Unlike that of the bluntly feminist *Daybreak* magazine, it is tailored to convert by degrees those who might otherwise wholly revile everything associated with the "New Woman". Yet the "Ladies' Page" remains a general, all-purpose women's magazine. Whether this is a deliberate ploy on Cabot's part or an actual reflection of her political stance is indeterminable, but it was a tactic used by nineteenth-century feminists in many instances.

By the time of Cabot's appointment, New Zealand women had already won the vote and gained access to tertiary education and the professions. Yet there remained much progress to be made before women would be comfortably assimilated into these new political, educational and occupational areas. Social values would not simply be changed with the passing of a bill; they required re-evaluation and negotiation. The 1890s, which were marked by such success for the Women's Movement, were also the most fraught with obstruction and contention. The falling fertility rate increased social anxiety regarding women's wider employment and educational opportunities, while medical authorities affirmed public paranoia that women were "unfitting" themselves for the role of motherhood. In the "Ladies'

Page" Cabot addresses many of these issues, although rather than arguing a personal political stance, her method is more one of revelation. By reporting the activities of women who are confidently and successfully breaching age-old barriers and challenging perceived feminine limitations, she seeks to reconstitute normative female behaviour and to raise the horizons of expectation for her female readers. In many instances she highlights the women who have reconciled a career with traditional familial obligations, tending toward the popular "domestic feminism" described by Olssen (180). All of the ideas and opinions Cabot does express have this derivative quality, issuing from an established pro-suffrage discourse and reflecting shifting emphases in her own social environment. Yet the brand of enthusiasm and fervour she brings to such discussions is distinctively her own. Fired with an infectious positivity, Cabot is frequently dramatic in her presentation of a future vision of womanhood. Counteracting negative perceptions of feminine frailty and inability, she asserts a faith in feminine strength, ingenuity, health, vitality, and liberty. The purpose of this chapter is to explore these representations and to ascertain the nature of Cabot's public relationship to the "New Woman". This will involve a consideration of her treatment of women's suffrage (nationally and internationally), women's education, employment and independence, marriage and motherhood, and also a discussion of her inherently conservative approach, which, at times, contributes to a sense of ambiguity. Some attempt will be made to determine at which point this ambiguity intersects with the natural heterogeneity of periodical discourse and the dialectics of feminist discourse; although, without knowing more of Cabot's private person, this is difficult. Further, a brief comparison will be made between Cabot's interest in the Women's Movement and that evinced by the editors of other women's sections, to establish why Cabot is fundamentally unique in her field.

Before addressing material specifically concerning feminist issues, it is interesting to note the content of the fiction section of the "Ladies' Page". While non-realistic and usually implausibly romantic, it still constitutes an important element of reader identification. It is introduced here as a precursor to the main subject of the chapter because it is separate from the news items of the "Page", yet still integral, and because it forms a useful basis for later discussion of heterogeneity. For the working-class woman the fictional heroines of

the "Ladies' Page" were as remote from the realities of everyday experience as fairy-tale princesses. For the middle-class girl, however, these heroines represented an ideal to live up to. From a modern day perspective the fiction section thus presented ripe opportunity for the feminist editor to shift the ideal towards a new model of femininity, towards the non-traditional and non-stereotyped behaviour reflecting the initiatives of the Women's Movement. But this is not the case; the fiction section is perhaps the most conservative element of the "Ladies' Page". Of the sample issues examined, only one heroine may be said to hark from the ranks of the "New Woman", and that is Phyllis Traherne of Helen Hetherington's "The Juggernaut", whose activities and representation are such to render her an anti-heroine. The idea of the emancipated, independent woman is cast in a dark shade by Hetherington, with members of that league being foregrounded as harsh, cynical, and coolly indisposed towards marriage:

The announcement of Phyllis Treherne's engagement caused quite a flutter amongst the ranks of the Emancipated: "Going to join the ranks of the fettered?" exclaimed Dolly Wargrave, with a cynical smile: "astounding!"

"You can't say that I'm a solitary exception", with some irritation.

"Quite the reverse. You've scrambled down from the fence, and thrown yourself in with the common herd".

(6 June 1900, 6)

Phyllis herself expresses shame at her earlier feminist activities: her donning of "rationals" and the "nonsense" she spouted on a platform about the "independence of woman". These are associated with a rash, impulsive, wayward character, which, in its later expression, ultimately leads to her husband's paraplegia. Disobeying his wishes, Phyllis rides in the motor-car that causes him to be thrown from his horse. Even after the accident he shows nothing but tenderness and care for Phyllis, further heightening her own unwifely conduct. Like the motor-car itself, she is the "Juggernaut" of the story's title, and both are cast as dangerous and frightful products of the modern age.

The implicit moral of the tale is that the "New Woman" does not make a suitable or comely wife.

Aside from stories concerning the "Servant Problem", in the majority of instances the heroine is a young middle-class woman who is either single and courting any number of eligible bachelors, or newly married and acclimatising to the charming quirks of couplehood. The scenarios focus upon conventional themes of choosing a suitable spouse, dying of heartbreak, or the endearing tantrums that drive husbands to despair at their slavery to feminine caprice. There are no heroines exploring the realms of tertiary education, pursuing medical careers, or assuming the lifestyle of the intrepid adventuress; and there are none of the quests for personal fulfilment and independence which are described elsewhere in the "Page". Satisfaction in life is associated solely with the acquisition of true love; and there is a significant lack of any pertinent sentiment relating to women's issues.

At the time there were, in fact, a proliferation of novels concerning the emergence of new female types, which explored a variety of radical themes and achieved great success, often selling millions of copies (Bland 151). Cabot herself makes a point of highlighting various feminist authors in other parts of the "Ladies' Page", although she frequently does so without commenting on the content of their work. There are a number of possible reasons for this conventionality: it may have been a lack of suitable material in short-story form; a resistance of the "Ladies' Page" genre to experimental fiction; or a personal and, or, professional disregard for material which was often more sexually oriented. In a discussion of the popular "New Woman" fiction of the 1890s, Lisa Tickner writes that many of these works debated the merits of marriage and divorce, and explored the social constraints governing feminine sexuality. English suffragists often objected to such subject matter on the grounds that women's political and educational emancipation would thereby become associated with the more inflammatory issue of sexual emancipation, resulting in damaging consequences for their cause (Tickner 183). Cabot most probably did not think to question the content of the fiction section, merely accepting the material published by other mainstream newspapers. However, the result is a clear schism between the fiction and non-fiction sections of the "Ladies' Page" in what women are ideally striving for and achieving.

There were a variety of different feminisms extant in the nineteenth-century (Tickner 153). Depending upon background, people had different reasons and objectives for supporting the Women's Movement and developed arguments for, and against, its various causes accordingly. Cabot's own sympathies with the Women's Movement and the foundations for her support were established at an early stage in the suffrage articles she wrote prior to her editorial appointment. As they remained largely consistent throughout the period of her editorship, this early phase merits a brief elucidation. In "Do Women Need the Suffrage?" (*Canterbury Times*, 21 Sept. 1893, 35) Cabot's feminism is essentially service based. It follows the main argument of the New Zealand suffrage movement that women equipped with the vote would be better able to serve their communities. Drawing upon principles of the bourgeois ideology which stressed the moral guardianship of the mother and her importance in the nation-building process, suffragists contended that women's experience of the world was too limited to facilitate the successful educating of children. The opportunity to vote and to engage in tertiary education and the wider world of employment would greatly remedy this. This is the main tenet of Cabot's article. She writes passionately of the awe-inspiring responsibilities of child-rearing and emphasises that at present it is entrusted to the "untrained thoughtless girl":

people would narrow women's horizon; despite her straining after more light, they would deny her rights that the lowest sot in the gutter enjoys ... and yet they would have her perform a task requiring the loftiest hope, the widest insight, and an almost omniscient wisdom.

The second issue Cabot addresses is the degrading circumstances of the many women unable to marry. While detractors might complain about women competing with men for employment, the unhappy alternatives for the single girl are to "loaf on her male relatives" or simply starve. Cabot argues it is therefore an urgent necessity that women be accepted into wider fields of public employment.

Finally, Cabot expresses a commitment to suffrage on the basis of women's intellectual and emotional fulfilment. She argues that the vote would endow women with the sense of having equal rights and equal ownership with men; it would initiate a new enthusiasm for national interests and active self-development; and the ensuing empowerment through knowledge would instil dignity, "queenliness", beauty and grace. Ultimately this is again service-oriented, as Woman, having attained the potentialities of "truest womanhood", is projected as thence becoming a mighty factor in the world's progress. Cabot expresses distaste for the more radical feminist: the woman who wears "mannish attire", swaggers, smokes cigarettes and assumes "an aggressively independent air". This woman she denounces as the "abortion" of the "spirit of freedom" and not its "legitimate product". There is a strong sense throughout the article that the world is waiting for a new prototype of femininity, a new ideal woman who will carry with her society's hopes for a future Utopia. The achievement of the vote is the first stepping-stone to her creation.

All of these ideas are reiterated and significantly augmented throughout the "Ladies' Page". They receive their fullest treatment in Cabot's editorial column, "Here and There", and in the "Woman's World" section, although they also appear in article-length pieces from around New Zealand and abroad. While Cabot does not make an explicit declaration of an editorial policy with regard to women's issues (as evinced in *White Ribbon* and *Daybreak*), the first month's worth of editorials carry an implicit political manifesto. Beginning in the first issue (3 May 1894) with a discussion of concerns in women's employment, in the second issue (10 May 1894) Cabot raises the question of Honours for women of achievement, holds Queen Victoria aloft as a supreme model for female emulation, makes positive statements upon women's educational and professional progress, and notes the rapidity of women's advancement in New Zealand. "The Queen herself led the way for women", she writes, "when she unhesitatingly assumed a post of regal power and world-wide publicity, and women have been quick to follow her initiative Women doctors, professors, and journalists have joined in the work monopolised by men hitherto; while in creative art, in literature, science and music, we have already many names to be proud of" (HT 10 May 1894, 8).

It is in the third issue (17 May 1894), however, that the audience receives the most detailed and impassioned indication that Cabot intends to champion the cause of women's rights. Declaring that "this is the age of woman" and that "Woman has discovered herself *en masse*," Cabot states:

she took every opportunity offered her for education, and she used every opportunity to apply her education after it was her possession. The year 1893 was her opportunity to show what her education, her training in organisation, her belief in her responsibility for the common fame and common good of her country enabled and compelled her to do. Woman as woman centralised may have been a discovery to some, but woman as a positive influence, a common factor in national development, is not the discovery of a year ago. She is not a phenomenon, but a human being, who needs education, experience and natural endowment to use with wisdom the opportunities that came to her. She holds no patent from nature that saves her from error of judgement, nor endowment that frees her from the toilsome years of preparation, if she is to reach the position her true lover sees her filling. (17 May 1894, 8)

Here Cabot shows the spirit in which she means to continue. As one of the "true lovers" of Woman she will endeavour to encourage women to seek education and to make the most of present opportunities in order to achieve this lofty potential. The beginning point for such development is represented by the vote. This is portrayed by Cabot as the key to unlocking all limitations to women in law, education, employment and self-improvement. It is a step which the women of New Zealand had already achieved, although Cabot evidently perceives a need to alert her readers' minds to the value and possibility of this new privilege. In many instances, in diverse fields, she questions what effects one might anticipate from women having gained the vote. "What are the results that we may expect in the artistic world as a consequence of women's enfranchisement?", she asks. The answer: "surely it is reasonable to expect that the next

century will be fruitful in eminent women painters!" (HT 31 May 1894, 8). Why voting and painting should be connected is not explained, except that the franchise is described as removing "the trammelling influences which have up until the present time interfered with women's progress in this direction". The amendment of political inequality between men and women exemplifies the removal of all lesser inequalities as well. It represents a new instrument of control for women over their own lives.

Cabot proudly communicates to her readers that suffrage is an achievement that places New Zealand women at the forefront in the progressive modern age: "in New Zealand women have done more basic work. Asserting their right to have a voice in the government of their country, they have, in this direction, advanced beyond their English sisters" (HT 10 May 1894, 8). Yet she insists that better is to follow and that the benefits of the suffragists' labour will only be truly realised by their daughters who "will bring it to perfection". Women have made a rapid advancement, "but as yet they are only on the threshold of a future teeming with infinite possibilities" (9).

According to Denise Riley this futuristic vision was a common feature of the rhetoric of late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminism. She writes that if "woman" could be credited as having a tense, it was a future tense (47). In the midst of the uncertainties, anxieties and prejudices of the social context, it was constantly emphasised that future generations would witness the glorious realisation of woman's full humanity. Society, as a result, would be blessed. The socialist moralities of Fourier, Engels and Owen are cited as the foundations for this belief. In one form or another, all of them projected women as heralding a "New Moral World". But obviously the potential for this reading existed already within the discourse of the bourgeois ideology. Whatever its origin, it is a visionary ideal regularly invoked by Cabot.

The measure of women's political progress internationally is provided by Cabot's regular up-dates of overseas suffrage campaigns. These include reports of efforts to increase interest and support amidst the female community, such as the short story competition run by English suffragists (WW 10 May 1894, 10), as well as announcements of concrete political achievements. The "battlers" for women's rights in France are attributed with a small but significant victory in the empowerment of tradeswomen to vote for the Judges of the Tribunals

of Commerce (WW 17 May 1894, 10); in the 31 May 1894 issue it is reported that there is the possibility of a Bill being passed in Holland allowing women to be elected as members of parliament (WW 10); and in the 28 January 1897 issue it is announced that Viscount Templeton has agreed to introduce the Woman's Suffrage Bill into the following session of the House of Lords in England (WW 8).

The rhetoric employed by Cabot, combined with this cumulative and piecemeal effect of achievement, contributes to the sense of an ongoing world-wide war which is won battle by battle. The ultimate goal is universal female emancipation and all women are participants, whether or not they are actively engaged. Articles such as "What the Woman's Suffrage Might Do" from the *New York Sun* (24 May 1894, 9) highlight the fact that in both Spain and England women hold the highest position, while in New Zealand the first Mayoress in her own right has been elected. While demonstrating that the activities of New Zealand feminists are an integral part of an international cause, this also significantly shows that New Zealand women are perceived abroad as leaders in the field. The majority of women were still wary of the stigma attached to members of their sex having a public voice. By illustrating such positive examples of women who not only maintain a public image but hold positions of extreme responsibility and power, Cabot contributes to the removal of that stigma. She recognises that both a sense of female solidarity and a feminine faith in women's ability to make a difference in political issues are pivotal to encouraging their greater participation.

The benefits of women's political activism on a local level are demonstrated by Cabot in her recording of meetings and resolutions of such groups as the Canterbury Women's Institute, the National Council of Women and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In the 17 May issue of 1894, a brief description is given of the W.C.T.U.'s monthly general meeting. This lists as topics of discussion the prominent subjects of prostitution and the unequal divorce law. While Cabot does not print details relating to the latter, she does publish the resolutions made on the former. These are: "that it be an indictable offence for any woman under 21 to be found in a brothel or earning money by prostitution"; "that steps be taken to enforce the Act already on the Statute Book suppressing brothels"; and "that the age of consent be raised to eighteen" (10).

From a modern day perspective, Cabot's emphasis in this report would seem to reinforce the sexual double standard of morality rather than address it from a feminist view-point, as the penalties described fall upon the women involved in prostitution rather than the men who encourage it. Prostitution was a serious issue for New Zealand feminists. The Contagious Diseases Act,³⁶ passed on 3 September 1869 in a bid to control prostitution, was a matter of contention throughout the 1880s and '90s *because* it punished women but attached no blame to male clients. Men were responsible for infecting prostitutes with venereal disease in the first place, yet they were given no accountability and were spared the humiliation of inspection. The W.C.T.U., N.C.W., Southern Cross Society, and *Daybreak* magazine were unanimous in their opposition to the Act, and fought to have it repealed in 1893 and 1896. The war was finally won in 1910 (Lévesque 10). Amongst these groups there was still a strong repulsion towards prostitution, however. Charlotte MacDonald divides anti-Act campaigners into two parties: those who argued from moral and, or, religious conviction for the establishment of one moral code and who were in total opposition to prostitution in any form; and those who were angered purely by the unjust legislation and what amounted to state-approved sexual exploitation (MacDonald 15).

Through her choice of reporting and through the meeting's resultant resolutions, Cabot and the other members of the Canterbury W.C.T.U. appear to be aligned with the former group, whose agenda could be more widely interpreted as morally prudish and repressive. Regardless of this, the publication of such information still serves to show that no matter what one's affiliations may be, women are capable of exercising a power for good in their lives if bold enough to make a public stand. These are issues which concern women directly and which only a woman would draw attention to. As Cabot demonstrates in relation to female factory inspectors, the injustices and discomforts that prevail in women's lives are most likely to be

³⁶ The Act for the Better Prevention of Contagious Diseases stipulated that if there was reason to believe a woman was engaged in prostitution, she could be subject to a periodical vaginal examination for up to one year. If infected, the woman could then be confined to a female reformatory, until the visiting surgeon saw fit to release her (Lévesque 9). The Act was only invoked in Auckland and Canterbury, and then used very briefly: Auckland 1882-1886; Canterbury 1872-1885 (MacDonald 22). In the statute books, however, it still represented a gross inequality in the treatment of women and men, and whether invoked or not, it had the potential to great harm.

remedied by concerned female parties, which is justification enough for their involvement in the political arena.

The example serves also to reinforce women's suitability for addressing public questions of morality. The "inherent" moral superiority of women, and the moralising influence they could potentially exert in the polling booths and in politics in general, had been the underpinning argument of New Zealand suffragists. In the W.C.T.U.'s leaflet of 1888, "Ten Reasons Why the Women of New Zealand Should Vote",³⁷ points six, seven and eight stated:

Because the presence of women at the polling booth would have a refining and purifying effect.

Because the votes of women would add weight and power to the more settled and responsible communities.

Because women naturally view such questions [on the preservation of peace, law and order] from a somewhat different standpoint to men ... they would often see what men had overlooked, and thus add a new security against any partial or one-sided legislation.
(Lovell-Smith 66)

This line of thought can be traced throughout Cabot's work and is best exemplified in her comments relating to women's "peculiar abilities", which will be examined later.

Another example illustrating the necessity of women's presence in politics, which is particularly pertinent to Cabot's own experience, is in the description of a letter sent by the C.W.I. to the Teachers' Institute. It offers hearty congratulations to "the women teachers of Canterbury, on their efforts to remove the many serious disabilities under which they are at present suffering" ("Women's Institute", 6 June 1900, 7). The most significant disabilities were the lack of pay parity with male teachers, and the insufficiency of the pay they did receive in meeting the needs of living independently (as so many

³⁷ This leaflet was distributed to every member of the House of Representatives.

female teachers did). Again, this is an issue which only a woman would perceive as requiring urgent remedy.

Education is equally as important as politics for Cabot, if not more so, and when she uses the term it is often in its broadest sense, referring not only to the higher education made recently available to women, but to a constant process of self-development and growing awareness. Cabot conveys the sense that until this point in time, women have only been sleeping, cocooned in a domestic vacuum. Yet now that they are in a position to have a voice in the running of the government they should be following national and international events with avidity. In many instances reading is recommended by Cabot as a daily ritual in which all women should engage, not only for the purpose of extending their minds, but also as a useful break from the monotony of housework. The effect of her statements is to encourage women to believe firstly, that they have minds; and secondly, that those minds might be stimulated into a usefulness beyond the daily concerns of the household. Adopting the intimate editorial "we", Cabot suggests that women are universally suffering from intellectual deprivation:

We feel that after the creature comforts of the household have been attended to, we have a mind of our own to feed, and that all the chat we enjoy with our callers leaves no true satisfaction behind. It is like confectionery - sweet, but unwholesome. (HT 10 May 1894, 8)

Supplying books as the solution, she writes that "the reader of great thoughts" absorbs "their strength and sweetness, and combining them weaves out some new beauty". This contributes to a "mental expansion" and "makes common-place duties seem to glow with new light and loveliness":

We need the stirring words of men who have seen the light to make us cleave through our routine life, and bring us glimpses of wider grander possibilities lurking within us.

This is a highly romanticised vision of reading which, with its promises of beautification and transformation of the mundane, is deliberately designed to catch at feminine desire. Interestingly, Cabot does not associate "stirring" words with female writers, although she frequently highlights their work in other instances. The possible reasons for this are that she had not yet read any "stirring" books by women; that, in spite of her best intentions, she was still locked into a perspective which placed higher authority upon men's writing; or that she was following Ruskin's words in *Sesame and Lilies* so closely that she failed to notice this exclusion.

The purposes of education, as Cabot perceives them, are to enable women to be more informed, and therefore to utilise their voting privilege more wisely; to enable mothers to educate their children more thoroughly, and therefore produce a stronger nation; and, finally, to enable women to increase their career prospects so that single women would have better means of self-support, and women who worked before marriage would be able to bring a greater independence and versatility to the roles of wife and mother. Within the sample issues studied, Cabot's comments upon the subject are not expansive, but those she does make are adamant, impassioned, and fired with a proselytising zeal. In the 14 January 1897 editorial she expresses her low opinion of those who would obstruct both women's education and employment:

when will the half-man, the half-woman, cease their senseless outcry against progressive womankind? "They are unfitting themselves for wifehood and motherhood; they are learning too much; they are too independent"; and, worst crime of all, "they are presuming to criticise the men themselves". It is time that this silly cry - the last folly of the great unthinking majority - was given the ridicule it so richly merits. (4)

Logic is Cabot's preferred weapon. She questions whether the artizan(sic), passing through a painful apprenticeship, is unfitting himself for work, or whether ignorance is the best equipment for the doctor, lawyer or engineer:

merely to hint at such a notion would be to arouse doubt as to one's sanity, yet women are told that they must be ignorant of business, of the great inflexible laws of cause and effect, of the principles that rule in the world, in order to be the better able to train up their children for the business of life! One wonders how anyone can possibly be imposed on by such foolishness!

Cabot's best tributes to women's education are through the small vignettes she provides of the activities of female students. By illustrating what other women are doing and achieving, she not only creates a sense of social acceptability but also a sense of assurance that women are capable of acquitting themselves well in higher education. There is an air of challenge and adventure, and an affirmation that the feminine sphere is gradually but steadily expanding. For example, she reports that of the 2113 students at Helsingfors University, 211 are female. There are 508 men and 79 women studying mathematics; 450 men and 117 women studying historic philology; 546 men and eight women studying law; and 180 men and 57 women studying medicine (WW 21 Jan. 1897, 8). The fact that Miss Harriet Adams of Kansas has graduated in surgery, beating all of the men to achieve first prize for the best commencement examination, is reported (WW 31 May 1894, 9). And Miss Phoebe Rheavyn, D.Lit., of London, receives a mention for being appointed as a tutor to students of the University of Manchester, and as Warden of Ashburne House Hall of Residence. Cabot writes that for three years Rheavyn held a Fellowship and Lectureship at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, and since then has been a tutor and lecturer in English literature at Somerville College, Oxford (HT 2 Oct. 1907, 71).

Women's pursuits in vocational courses are also elucidated, with much attention being devoted to horticultural studies in particular. This is perhaps because gardening was considered one of the more attractive and enjoyable occupations for women, but one which few women would pursue as a career if concerned about the arduous labour attached. In an article on the Horticultural College in Melbourne, which began admitting women in 1891, Cabot writes of the trepidation of the Principal, who despaired of ever being able to preserve women's interest in the subjects of trees and soil science. Yet

the female students had proven themselves to be both capable and enthusiastic, and it is with great pride that Cabot writes that “women of all degrees of vigour, intelligence and social standing were among the students, and one and all had to perform ordinary manual work in the orchard and garden during a wet, cold winter, followed by an unusually fierce summer” (“Colonial Women and Horticulture”, 6 June 1900, 8). Articles such as these represent Cabot’s personal “Women Can Do Anything” stance.

There is one point at which Cabot’s attitude to education appears somewhat ambivalent, when she fails to comment on an article from the *Boston Herald* which she quotes verbatim in her editorial. While the writer positively asserts that women all around America are engaging in the same studies as their brothers, and are in many instances doing much better than their brothers, he questions whether they are able to sustain the strain, having a “finer nervous fibre”:

The point of danger ... is that our educators have not yet learned how to treat these girls in such a way that the work does not make inroads upon their health. In hundreds of homes bright and interesting girls have been fatally injured by indiscriminate and unwise work; and it is far better that our girls should know less about books and more the pleasant and agreeable things of life, if the higher education is to be obtained at the expense of nerve force. (17 May 1894, 9)

This was a subject of great concern in New Zealand in the 1890s. Influential figures such as Dr. Truby King³⁸ were publicly emphasising the harmful effects of tertiary education upon women, and prescribing domestic education in its stead. Although at a later date than the above excerpt, King is quoted as stating in 1897 that the “over pressure” induced in girls by academic pursuits seriously impairs their “potentialities of reproduction and healthy maternity” (Olssen 169). There were equally prominent figures on the other side of the debate, however, including Dr. Emily Siedeberg, member of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, and Dr. Agnes Bennett, Superintendent of St. Helen’s Maternity Hospital (Wellington).

³⁸ Founder of the Society for Promoting the Health of Women and Children and Director of the Mental Asylum at Seacliff.

Considering that Cabot had herself been a university student, it is odd that she does not contribute an opinion based on her personal experience. The writer's assertions do not appear to bear any relevance to Cabot's situation, as her university records reveal an enthusiasm for a wide variety of subjects; and the only visible impediment to her completing her degree seems to have been an inability at maths. Yet there is no indication as to whether she agrees or disagrees with the above statements.

Upon the issue of women's employment Cabot is extremely vocal, although again she utilises more fully the method of showing what other women are doing rather than arguing a particular point. She eagerly illustrates women's advancement into all manner of work: from the professions, such as law and medicine, to the newly-created roles of "type-writer girl" and telephonist, as well as the outlandish and unconventional occupations pursued by the more adventurous. The effect of this, again, is to establish a sense of social acceptability. It impresses upon the reader that women everywhere are infiltrating hitherto unknown realms and, more significantly, that they are doing so with success, grace and dignity. It alerts women to the new possibilities in their lives.

With regard to the professions, Cabot perceives women as making a considerable contribution. She is quick to emphasise the achievements of women gaining professional status. Miss Titus, for example, a New York lawyer of several years, is applauded for having won a reputation "among the keenest lawyers of America as the cleverest female lawyer in the United States" ("A Modern Portia", 14 Jan. 1897, 8). In the management of public institutions, such as hospitals and mental asylums, it is stated that women "have shown themselves to be of indispensable value" (HT 3 May 1894, 8). Cabot writes that in America at least this has resulted in many asylums coming under the superintendence of lady doctors - a "new departure that has been attended by marked success". The potential progression of women in this field in Australasia is illustrated by the fact that a lady graduate was recently accepted as a candidate for the post of medical officer at Melbourne Hospital. While the bid was unsuccessful, the event reflects unequivocally that "the prejudice against lady doctors is fading away at the approach of the well-trained women already emerging from our University doors" (HT 3 May 1894, 8).

Other professional women who receive attention include dentists, the first woman elected as bank director in Utah ("Banking has not, up to this time, been an occupation much invaded by women" [WW 17 May 1894, 7]) authors, editors, journalists, scientists and professors. Writing and journalism interest Cabot the most intensely, obviously because these were the "progressive" feminine employments in which she herself was involved. They are also the fields in which she shows women as having experienced the greatest triumphs. Famous Italian novelist, Madame Scarfoglio, is revealed to be the editor of a periodical with the largest circulation of any journal in southern Italy (WW 10 May 1894, 10); and Mademoiselle Edmond Adam is credited with being the leading female journalist in Paris. Having achieved distinction also as a politician, author and editor, Cabot states that Adam's name has been given to a Parisian street - "an honour rarely bestowed during a person's lifetime" (WW 31 May 1894, 10).

Clerking, the most popular and most widely accepted of the new employments for women, is presented in the "Ladies' Pages" as being readily open to the interested girl. Articles such as "The Type Writer Girl" (*London Leader*) reinforce the sense of normalcy of women being in the labour force, and the eminent suitability of their assuming these new roles. The writer of the above article states that while twelve or fourteen years ago it would have been difficult to find London offices employing women, "now it is almost as difficult to come across an office that does not employ women either as clerks, book-keepers, or amanuenses":

The most hostile of critics have been surprised by the adaptability shown by women to office routine, and their aptitude for commercial methods, they having proved themselves to equal men, and often, as far as accuracy and painstaking work is concerned, to excel them. (27 June 1900, 8)

More importantly this article suggests the methods by which the young girl might achieve such employment, stressing the importance of a "fair, all-round education" up to the age of fifteen, followed by courses in short-hand, typing, book-keeping, and commercial French and German. The article also addresses the issue of wages being kept

down by women who are working only for "pocket money" rather than from economic necessity. The gravity of such a situation is made explicit by the writer, who reminds readers that while clerking may be perceived as a stop-gap before matrimony, at least a third of women will never marry and will be permanently thrown upon their own resources.

This relates well to Cabot's more realistic approach to marriage prospects and shows the "Ladies' Page" functioning as a practical vocational guide, although it would have been more useful, perhaps, to present an article with a New Zealand perspective. Similarly, while it is helpful to know that a handbook of "Women's Employments", listing 56 recognised female occupations, has been published in London (WW 17 May 1894, 10), the means of access to this book, or to a New Zealand equivalent, would be more beneficial information. This is an occasion where the deference to "Home" news is more redundant than helpful. On Cabot's part it shows a lack of initiative in an area where local research would have greatly aided her cause.

Cabot takes great delight in communicating the more surprising occupations undertaken by women, both for the sake of entertainment and for disproving long-held assertions concerning women's frailty and intellectual inability. Female steeplejacks, mariners, explorers and railway workers all find a place amongst the columns of the "Ladies' Page", constituting what must have been quite startling images of women for that period. This is especially true when women's physical capabilities are shown to be comparable to those of men. Female sailors, for example, are revealed not only to be common in Scandinavia but to be "equal to most seamen in dexterity and power of endurance" (WW 14 Jan. 1897, 8). In "The Energetic American Girl" (25 Sept. 1907, 74), Cabot lists census results which show that a large number of women are engaged in "the work of men". The list includes street railway "motormen", locomotive engineers, "firemen", ship carpenters, roofers and slaters, blacksmiths, well-borers, ocean and river pilots, baggage "men", hack drivers, boiler-makers, and charcoal and coke burners. It is women inventors, however, who seem to hold an all-absorbing fascination for Cabot, and primarily because their successes demonstrate that women are equally as capable of genius as men. While prior to 1860 female patentees were almost unheard of, Cabot announces that they now number several hundred, proving that women "had only to share more generally in

the educational advantages of men to be their equals in the field, so long considered exclusively theirs" ("Women as Inventors", 13 June 1900, 9; "Women Inventors", 20 June 1900, 7). The most impressive fact for Cabot is that several "ladies" have achieved fame and fortune by this means, and she believes that the newness of this field of feminine endeavour suggests that even greater accomplishments by women may be anticipated in the future.

At the same time as presenting a positive portrayal of the women participating in new areas of employment, Cabot also often paints them as being extraordinary and having abilities *above* those of the average woman. These are abilities which not only enable them to perform the work but also to run the gauntlet of public objection and inquisitiveness. It is said of Miss Titus, the lawyer, that she must frequently endure the "curious stares" of those intrigued to see "how a really-strong-minded woman looks when viewed quite near" ("A Modern Portia", 14 Jan. 1897, 8). Mrs. Crawford, the Paris correspondent for the *Daily News* and *Pall Mall Gazette*, is quoted as saying that "no woman ought to think of writing for a livelihood unless, in addition to special aptitude, she possesses dauntless courage, exceptional health and powers of physical endurance, and a considerable amount of reserve force" ("Miss Colonia in London", 10 May 1894, 10). Miss Smith, the lady gardener at Kew, is equally discouraging, stating that "the work is hard, and not many women could stand it I do not recommend gardening as a profession for ladies, because so few could stand the hard labour" ("An Amazon of Kew" [*Daily Express*] 5 Aug. 1903, 6). It is interesting to note Miss Smith's transition from the term "women" to "ladies", which clearly constitutes a class distinction. Adhering to the stereotyped image of middle-class women as delicate, frail creatures, she appears to be implying that only the most vigorous working-class women would be suited to gardening. It is an inherently snobbish remark which again casually reinforces the segregation of the newspaper's female readers. Miss Smith is not a lower-class woman; nor does she intend to align herself with that class. But as a middle-class woman she shows unusual resilience and strength of character; her gardening career is cast as being all the more heroic because she is of the pampered, privileged social stratum, unaccustomed to the necessity of labour.

These tributes to feminine heroism and fortitude provide further examples of ambivalence in Cabot's feminist stance. Women are

encouraged to believe that it is within their grasp to achieve things previously beyond their reckoning, but are then persuaded that the accomplishment is to be made by proxy, through the stronger, more capable representatives of their sex. This is amplified by Cabot's passage on the "true heroines" of society (HT 21 Jan. 1897, 4). Contending that it is not within every woman's scope to be a Florence Nightingale, she states that the majority of women must content themselves with their domestic lot. Such statements contribute to a sense that the quintessential "Woman", who is so frequently referred to and who is projected as achieving a bright and glorious future, is not only anonymous, remote and super-human, but possibly even an abstraction. This is not helped by the fact that the majority of women Cabot foregrounds are overseas figures, hailing from places such as England, Turkey, America, and Russia. Apart from Kate Sheppard, "our fearless suffrage leader", no other New Zealand female role-models are spoken of in the sample issues.

The reliance upon syndicated material and the guiding belief that readers desired most to know of what was happening "at Home" are probably important factors in this oversight. Aside from this Cabot gives the impression of being personally awed and excited by the activities of many of the women she wrote of. For her, as well as her readers, there must have been a sense of incredulity at some of the female exploits she printed. Through a mixture of anticipation, disbelief and caution, it seems that she wished to communicate that there were wonderful opportunities for those who wanted them but, with such prejudice still to be borne on every side, nothing would be achieved through faint-heartedness or desultory attempt.

The forms of employment receiving the greatest validation, without any element of contradiction, are those perceived as being suited to women's "peculiar abilities". Roles such as that of the factory, school or work-shop inspector, teacher, doctor, and school-examiner are presented as natural extensions of women's role within the domestic sphere and therefore as "eminently fitted" for female participation. Notably, all of these occupations are distinctly middle-class; working-class women had no hope of attaining such employments, which raises the question of whether working-class women are also considered to be endowed with the "peculiar abilities" of femininity. This is another area, as in the instance of charity, where working-class women are cast as the recipients of the qualities of true

"womanliness" in others, while falling short of that standard themselves.

The qualities Cabot reads as intrinsically feminine relate closely to Ruskin's middle-class notion of "queenliness". They include the "utmost patience", "gentlest forbearance", "love of detail", "honesty and punctiliousness in the payment of debts", a general propensity towards providing care for the needy, and a refined moral nature. She is clearly using the popular suffrage argument that society as a whole would be greatly benefited by a more extensive deployment of women's nurturing capacities. The most intriguing instance of this is her insistence upon the importance of the female role in the vivisection debate. On the proposal to establish a Pasteur Institute in India, Cabot writes of the intense controversy between those who argue that science and mankind benefit "from the systematic torture of living animals" and those who "stigmatise research bought at the cost of the untold anguish of dumb creatures" (HT 14 Jan. 1897, 4). While the rhetoric she employs is sufficient to determine her own position, Cabot goes on to state:

It is not, of course, for the lay woman to decide which side is in the right. That is reserved for the woman doctor, and on this account ... we should rejoice at seeing the medical classes swelled by women everywhere.

As a cause of the vulnerable and defenceless, this fits the criteria of "women's work". Yet it is highly unusual for such a specialised professional area, which has no immediate connection with women, to be extolled as so suitable a field for female infiltration. This represents one of the instances where Cabot's forthright and practical perspective of the Women's Movement is most clearly defined.

Aside from the cause of the single woman unfortunate enough to never marry, Cabot's support for women's suffrage, education and wider employment opportunities is still firmly oriented around the objective of a perfected domestic existence. Like other leading New Zealand feminists, Cabot perceives all as being directed toward increasing women's suitability as wives and mothers. As a proponent of a strong work ethic, Cabot's conception of a community is one in which all members have an allotted task to fulfil. And she argues that

up until the present stage women have not been properly raised to the height of their potential usefulness. The type of training she deems most necessary is not that involving technical skill, such as the art of preparing a meal (although in her domestic advice such skill is set at a high value), but that which would instil a sense of independence and self-discipline, a sense of community, and of one's importance in that community's well-being. Cabot calculates that participation in the wider public sphere when young and single is conducive to this result. The educated woman, for example, would be more self-aware and through long hours of studious application and effort, would be induced to bring an equal amount of thought and care to the processes of cooking and cleaning. Having anticipated this outcome in her pre-"Ladies' Page" suffrage article, Cabot states in an 1897 editorial:

The fact is, and we are on the threshold of its recognition, that women never before were so seriously employed in fitting themselves to be, not house-keepers merely, but home-makers; not wet-nurses, but mothers in the highest sense, to the next generation. Who can doubt that the golfing, cycling woman of to-day is better fitted to become a wife than the lackadaisical, novel-absorbing, semi-invalid of a few years ago? A healthy woman has a healthy mind, and it craves healthy food, hence not only is culture spreading, but also those qualities of generosity and broad-mindedness from which women's narrow training has made them almost utter strangers. (HT 14 January, 4)

Sketches of women who simultaneously combine a successful career with the roles of wife and mother are readily given to illustrate this. Portrait painter, Mrs. Jopling, is quoted on her views of matrimony and art: "if you learn to draw", she says, "you have to observe and think for yourself, and all that is good training for matrimony. It will help one to be observant in taking care of a house" (HT 24 May 1894, 7). Cabot thoroughly approves of this, describing Mrs. Jopling as "one of those eminently sensible persons who ... believe in the desirability of making the young woman of the present day really useful members of society" and not "mere drawing-room

ornaments for the *fin-de-siècle* young man to look at and admire". In a similar vein she speculates on a well-known female painter's view of the Woman Question, "for not even a husband, five children, and immense success can keep Lady Butler from her art, and any one of the three is considered unfavourable to real progress" (WW 10 May 1894, 10). Cabot's purpose, in both instances, is to demonstrate not only that a career and a family need not be mutually exclusive, but that they are, in fact, mutually beneficial.

Cabot is not in favour of the telescopic women's rightist, and in the "Here and There" of 21 January 1897 (4) she puts forth an argument as to why women's progress, achieved at the expense of one's attention to domestic duty, is a misnomer. To gain such fame as Joan of Arc or Florence Nightingale is given to only a few women, writes Cabot, and while the role of heroine is fascinating to most women, "the woman who is seeking for some great object in life is precisely she who never finds it":

She is the woman who misses the little opportunities of life, who thinks her homely duties are beneath her, and neglects an ancient father or a delicate husband, to lecture on a temperance platform, or carry gallons of beef tea and jelly to her *protégés* in the slums.

The sentiments here are reminiscent of those expressed in "Juggernaut", where the active women's rightist is cast as irresponsible. For Cabot there were clearly right and wrong reasons motivating women's involvement in feminist activities. As evinced by her earlier rejection of female libertarianism, she was averse to those who favoured the cause merely for the cause's sake, or as an excuse for radical behaviour. Indubitably, she also would have condemned Phyllis' conduct.

Besides missing the purpose of the Women's Movement, as Cabot perceives it, the women who forsake their household responsibilities in the name of women's progress are also those who most damage that progress by supplying "ample opportunity ... to the cynic for sarcasm, and to the funny paper for cheap humour". The true heroines are rather to be found in "unpretending homes, in stuffy schoolrooms, in our shops and factories, in hot kitchens and reeking laundries; women who work with all their might at

whatsoever their hands find to do" (5).³⁹ These are the women who keep society functioning smoothly and happily, and who fill the role of "priestesses and mothers of nations" (HT 14 Jan. 1897, 4). It is clear from Cabot's editorial on Bismarck's birthday (HT 31 May 1894, 7) that she holds the traditional view of women in the home as being the necessary adjunct to the development of a strong nation and empire (a particularly pertinent notion in the colonial context of New Zealand). Bismarck's speech to the ladies of Germany encompasses many of the ideas contained in the bourgeois ideology and draws on conceptions expressed by Tacitus in 1 A.D., thus evincing a deep conservatism and traditionalism. The home is identified as the "true field" of women's work, and here the power of a "good woman" is seen as exercising an "ennobling and purifying influence". This represents the base root of a nation's strength, for the ideas that have "penetrated into the home-life of women" stick "much faster than the changing opinions of men, originating in party struggles":

What is precipitated into domestic life is, the net profit of the whole political business. It is transferred to the children, and is more durable and more capable of resistance in time of danger. If the thought of Imperialism has once gained the recognition of German womanhood then it is indestructible. (HT 31 May 1894, 7)

The role of the wife as applauder of her husband's deeds is also addressed by Bismarck, as well as the perception that women are naturally endowed with unique qualities - here expressed as a presiding prescience and sanctity strongly evocative of the "angel by the hearth" image. Women are firmly presented as the essential supports and helpmates to their husbands.

This is reinforced in the following passage, in which Cabot herself emphasises the value of the "happy" woman over the woman with a large fortune. For when disaster strikes and worldly prosperity takes wing "the happy dispositioned wife will see a way out of the difficulty, or will accept matters as they are in a sweet spirit of

³⁹ This is one of the few instances where Cabot describes the importance of the contributions of the working-class woman.

cheerfulness that endows her husband with a new zeal and causes him to look upon her as the guiding star of his existence" (8). Conversely, "the gloomy individual does naught but sit down and weep, having no word of encouragement for the husband, on whom the blow falls most heavily". This emphasis that women's identity derives from service to others is difficult to reconcile with today's feminism, but it is prevalent throughout the "Ladies' Page". The ideal woman is the "good daughter" and the "charming friend" whose compassion, sympathy, and attention to duty make her "an adorable wife for the man who is fortunate enough to win her" (HT 24 May 1894, 8). This is how women are most frequently recognised: as somebody's daughter, somebody's wife, the potential prize that all women should strive to be. "Woman" must shoulder emotional burdens cheerfully for the sake of others' happiness and ensure that no-one living her household experiences pain, suffering, or anxiety.

There are, however, indications elsewhere in the "Ladies' Page" that a more independent spirit is developing, and that young, single women are experiencing a greater freedom and autonomy. Several editorials refer to the new redundancy of the chaperone in the wake of the growing gregariousness of the "modern girl". Cabot speaks of the development of deep friendships between young women and their new proclivity for doing things in large parties. This is exemplified by the fifty Kansas girls who initiate a circulating wardrobe in order to finance a trip to the Paris Exhibition (HT 6 June 1900, 5). There is also the suggestion that women's recent educational advancement has relieved their naive dependence upon the guidance of others. Relating to the new generation's rejection of tradition and search for independence, "the Revolt of the Daughters" was an issue inspiring lengthy debate in English women's magazines, and Cabot often publishes excerpts showing the arguments of both sides, though her sympathies appear to lie more with the daughters. One supporter of the daughters is quoted as stating:

The revolt of the daughters is not ... a revolt against any merely surface conventionalities ... but it is a revolt against a bondage that enslaves her whole life. In the past she has belonged to other people, now she demands to belong to herself. In the past other people have decided her duties for her, now she asks that she

may decide them for herself. She asks simply and only for freedom to make out of her own life the highest that can be made, and to develop her own individuality as seems to her the wisest and best. (HT 24 May 1894, 8)

This is at once in opposition and agreement with sentiments discussed in the Bismarck passage. While resisting the idea that women must exist in subservience to others and under the control of others, the passage re-asserts that women are working towards the fulfilment of a higher ideal and that they are naturally inclined to do so; it echoes the argument of Cabot and other suffragists that women require a sense of independence to realize their best selves, though avoiding definitions of service and domesticity. The fundamental point to note here is that the writer is referring to single women. The overall indication given by the "Ladies' Page" is that independence and free-spiritedness (within limits) are positive qualities in single women because of the strength they imbue; but in marriage that strength is to be directed toward the family's interests, and the wife's interests and desires must henceforth become secondary.

Read in isolation, comments such as those in the Bismarck passage would suggest Cabot had little sympathy with the Women's Movement, but they are symptomatic of a generally more conservative feminist approach whose proponents were inclined to err on the side of caution. Cabot's concern about inspiring the ridicule of satirists is indicative of this, as is her statement that, rather than "take the Kingdom of Heaven by storm", the progress of women should be made "by slow and patient achievement": "At present [Woman] is like a child playing with dynamite. Rightly used, it is an immense power for good: abused, it results in self-destruction" (HT 21 Jan. 1897, 4). It is also important to note that Cabot's approach to the Women's Movement is commensurate with that of the editors of *Daybreak* and *White Ribbon*, New Zealand's first fully feminist publications. Both of these magazines tend towards arguing for women's rights from within the ideology of "separate spheres". Reflecting the same pattern of conservative radicalism, they emphasise motherhood and domesticity as being of paramount importance and lay claim to the extension of women's sphere on the basis of women's perceived moral and spiritual superiority (Waldron

27-28). Thus, while the *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page" does not identify itself as a radical feminist publication, it in fact represents the radical end of the scale in nineteenth-century New Zealand print culture.

By comparison with other texts of its proper sub-genre (that being the women's sections of general daily or weekly newspapers) it is wholly unique. Amongst the sample of women's sections studied, there is little to suggest that the political and social being of New Zealand womanhood may be undergoing a radical upheaval. The "Ladies Magazine" of Christchurch's *The Press* shows a continuing concentration upon traditional women's material, with an emphasis upon fashion (including large fashion plates), gossip and social events. It makes no mention of women's recent enfranchisement or related employment and education issues. The *New Zealand Mail's* "Ladies' Page" is similarly constituted, having columns entitled "Chit Chat", "Miss Colonia in London" (similar to that published in the *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page"), "Wellington Social Gossip", "Weddings", "Latest London Fashions", "Household", and "Good Health". There is an article in one issue entitled "Female Suffrage in New Zealand" but it deals with the subject in a desultory and discouraging manner, highlighting English speculation as to whether New Zealand's new bill will prove an ill-favoured experiment. There is no discussion of how this will impact upon women's lives; merely whether the men of New Zealand will come to regret it. Traditional formulae are also strictly adhered to in the women's sections of the *Otago Witness*, *The Auckland Weekly News*, *The Bruce Herald* and *The Alexandra Herald and Central Otago Gazette*. There is no indication in any of these newspapers that the lives of the present generation of women are materially different to those of their mothers; no suggestion that in the dawning of the modern era, definitions of femininity may be subject to change; and no sense of a newly-emerging female type. Yet these aspects are all highly evident in Cabot's editorship.

Before Cabot's appointment with the *Canterbury Times* there had been much discussion amongst women's organisations about the necessity for a New Zealand women's newspaper. The subject was first mooted by the Christchurch W.C.T.U. in 1889 (Lovell-Smith 13) and raised again during the suffrage anniversary celebrations held in Christchurch in September 1894 (Lovell-Smith 17). Clearly there was a

concern that New Zealand women did not have a publication of their own to deal with serious women's issues, although up until the suffrage celebrations the inauguration of such a periodical was considered somewhat premature (Lovell-Smith 13). The *Lyttelton* and *Canterbury Times* both recorded meetings in which the subject was discussed⁴⁰ and the advertisement presaging Cabot's appearance suggests that the *Times* company had received letters from female readers requesting a more progressive women's section. It seems certain, therefore, that until the appearance of a serious women's magazine the new "Ladies' Page" was deliberately intended to fill the perceived gap in women's reading. Addressing all areas of women's interest, from the traditional and "frivolous" to the more serious issues facing women of the 1890s, the formula of the "Ladies' Page" under Cabot's editorship was to prove so successful that it was continued after her resignation, under the editorship of Jessie MacKay.

Part of Cabot's success is due to the fact that Christchurch was the centre of the Women's Movement and a significant proportion of her audience were therefore already well-disposed to the discussion of women's issues. The most important factor, however, is her very mixing of the conservative with the radical, the "frivolous" with the serious. While it appears heterogeneous and contradictory to the modern reader, this amalgamation of tradition and modernity is a blend best-suited to the interests of the nineteenth-century reader and best-suited to making women's issues a subject of general concern rather than of concern merely to a minority group of feminists. It was a formula that worked most effectively in the nineteenth-century English "thinking woman's" magazines also. Cynthia White states that of all the "experiments" to provide for the educated reader, the most successful magazines were those such as *Woman* (1890) which occupied the middle ground, offering "'something more than the 'Lady's', or 'Society' paper or cookery book, and something less than the ponderous daily leader and parliamentary reports, or the academic weekly or monthly review'" (73).

The consequence of not pursuing the middle road is illustrated by the rapid demise of *Daybreak*. The editors of this magazine specifically stated that they sought to "draw women's attention to the serious problems in life", not to "encourage the petty mindedness and

⁴⁰ See for example *Lyttelton Times* 14 February 1895, 2)

frivolity we condemn", for which reason they excluded household, Society and fashion items (Waldron 50). From the very first issue, however, they received letters from readers complaining of the "heaviness" of the paper and demanding provision of the subjects that the editors had studiously ignored. Women did wish to be informed of serious issues, it seems, but not at the expense of the material they were accustomed to reading for pleasure and entertainment, regardless of its apparent inanity.

As illustrated in Chapters Two and Three, Cabot provides much that is traditional and much that equates with stereotyped feminine behaviour, beliefs and ideals. Intermingled with this, however, is information which deliberately seeks to widen women's expectations and to make them aware of new avenues of opportunity and new ways of seeing. Her method of "showing" what women around the world are doing is particularly effective in that it transfers these new activities from the hypothetical realm of possibility to the realm of actuality. She shows what women of determination are capable of accomplishing in the changing social circumstances, emphasising instances where their achievements are irrefutably connected with the social good and endorsing these women as suitable role-models. While her class-oriented address may at other times appear obstructive or alienating, this is an area where it exerts a positive force; by illustrating specifically what middle-class women are accomplishing in the new fields of education and employment, Cabot provides the social validation and sanctioning necessary to make such feminist pursuits acceptable.

More importantly, she reconciles these new pursuits with traditional domestic values and the principles of service to nation and empire. Vehemently refuting notions of women "unfitting" themselves for the roles of wife and mother, Cabot asserts that the undertaking of education and career can only be of benefit to the later execution of domestic duties. In fact, she effectively creates the sense that the desired perfection in domestic affairs never can be reached until such time as women are first permitted to fulfil their social, emotional and intellectual needs without impunity or restriction. This is a pertinent example of Roland Barthes' notion that "alternative formulations" are most successfully communicated if "reconstituted within the terms of the dominant ideology" (qtd in Tickner 162). Cabot translates all that is unfamiliar and daunting about

the "New Woman" into terms that are both familiar and accepted and which reflect the hegemonic bourgeois ideology. With her ever practical, no-nonsense editorial tone, she creates a new set of commonsense propositions that cannot logically be refuted.

CONCLUSION

In summation, this thesis would argue that far from being a cause for distraction or confusion the elements of heterogeneity in the "Ladies' Page" are in fact an essential and crucial part of Cabot's cultural role. The *Canterbury Times* employed Cabot with the objective of modernising the "Ladies' Page"; and it is evident from her own emphatic claims for the future of "Woman" and the progress of the Women's Movement that she had a personal interest in influencing the opinions of her readers. Her cultural role is therefore both prescribed by the *Canterbury Times* and self-prescribed, and with the aim of satisfying both herself and her employers Cabot sets out in each issue to bring to light a new element of women's rights, women's education, or women's employment.

The point of difficulty for the modern reader is that this material is juxtaposed with the traditional subject matter of middle-class women's media. The *Canterbury Times* as a whole is a middle-class newspaper and in her own presentation of topics, or through the presentation of other people's articles, Cabot flatters and privileges the opinions and values of a middle-class audience. She reproduces hegemonic ruling class ideologies, the most significant being the bourgeois domestic ideology and its doctrine of "separate spheres", and reinforces middle-class definitions of "womanliness", morality and virtue. In line with the traditional function of the New Zealand press as an instrument of "civilisation", she transmits the conventions of polite society.

But while this content appears at times to be in glaring contradiction to the feminist aim, it is very necessary to Cabot's success in communicating the values of the Women's Movement. For her words to have the desired impact, she must first impress upon her audience her qualifications as an upstanding middle-class woman; to emphasise the importance of women's issues as being of ongoing daily concern, she must place them amongst subjects which already hold that status. The notion of Miss Titus being "among the keenest lawyers of America" ("A Modern Portia" 14 Jan. 1897, 8), for example, must be made to seem as familiar and as natural as the drawing of one's work-basket to the fire. By presenting information on women's educational and occupational advances in the same context as

etiquette and household advice, they come under the overall auspices of what is good, virtuous and correct.

Even where a sense of opposition is more explicit, the apparent schism works in Cabot's favour. An example of this is when she criticises fashion and Society news while at the same time supplying that very information. In presenting fashion and Society columns, she is able to attract the readers who are desirous of such items and at the same stroke prick their social conscience. It can be argued, in light of this, that the cultural work of Cabot and the cultural work of the "Page" are always connected, for the latter can always be manipulated to suit the former's purpose.

Rather than see the "Ladies' Page" as an entanglement of contradiction, therefore, it is more appropriate to see it as a representation of social transition, a gradual blending of the old with the new in a delicate process of assimilation. This is a reflection of Cabot's own philosophy on the importance of "slow and patient achievement" and also a reflection of the *Canterbury Times* audience. The majority of women in the 1890s were not engaged in radical pursuits but leading ordinary domestic lives, and while they may have evinced an interest in the Women's Movement, they were not ready for a periodical that ignored their experience and concerned itself solely with feminist issues. These are the women described in Cynthia White's book as being "'neither able to sit at ease in the old confines, nor dash ahead with [their] pioneering sisters'" (89), and it is to these women that Cabot primarily addresses the "Ladies' Page", seeking to guide them gently but enthusiastically through a period of intense social change.

Cabot's own relationship to the "New Woman" is intimate; while she speaks often of an ideal future woman, she herself epitomises the new femininity. She is university educated, a public supporter of the Women's Movement and, in her role as a journalist on the staff of the *Canterbury Times*, she challenges directly the binary organisation of the sexes into "separate spheres". While pursuing her career, she also delays marriage and motherhood to a point where having children of her own is no longer a possibility. It may be argued that as an editor for a women's section Cabot is not stepping that far outside her "sphere", but again the gender segregation represented by the "Ladies' Page" is better-suited to her feminist purpose. It enables her to "speak" more directly and personally to the projected female

audience and to draw them into an intimate aside where the sense of female solidarity is positive and beneficial.

This has increased value and impact because of the rarity of women journalists in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Cabot was not only the first female editor for the *Canterbury Times* "Ladies' Page" but one of the first female editors to appear in a major New Zealand newspaper, and her work was therefore an important factor in the burgeoning identity of Canterbury women and of New Zealand women in general. Throughout her editorial work Cabot shows a deep concern for the processes of gender enculturation, actively engaging in shaping her readers' attitudes and re-constituting normative social behaviour. As a self-appointed protector and custodian of femininity, she seeks to preserve all that is positive in traditional definitions of "womanliness" while embracing new definitions that allow for greater freedom and personal autonomy. Countering popular images of the "New Woman" as a "mannish" creature wearing male clothing and smoking cigarettes, she presents images that accord with the traditional notions of feminine appeal and delineates the "New Woman's" role as being an organic and natural progression of that traditionally prescribed. As one who offers advice and guidance, her greatest gift to her readers is the unstinting optimism, fervour and hope she conveys with regard to a future "teeming with infinite possibilities".

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